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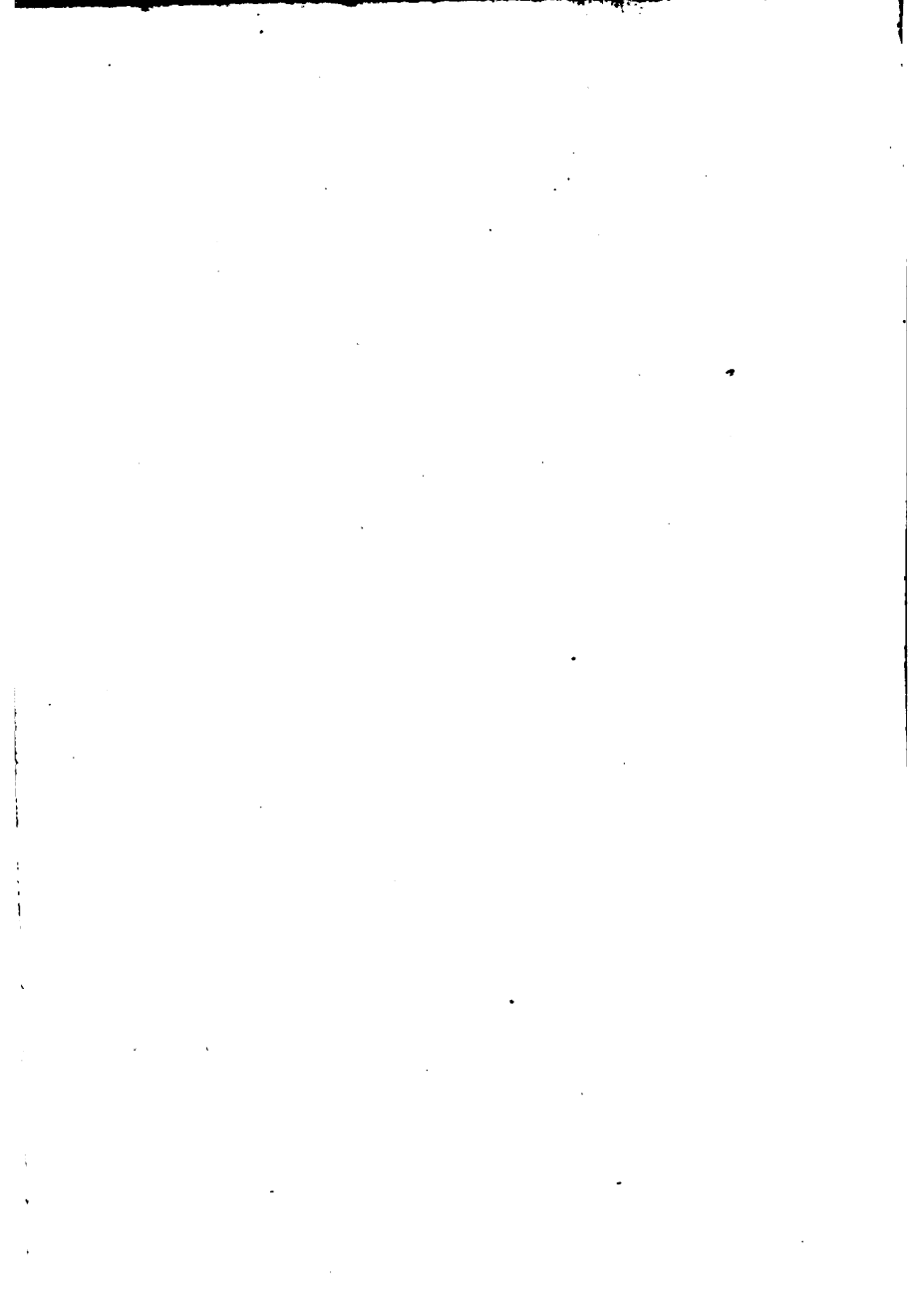
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TAYLOR  
THE  
NAVY.

~~Sticky Reading Room~~  
1893.

Mrs B. Munford  
Atkeley





THE LIFE AND WORK  
OF THE LATE  
WILLIAM TAYLOR, ❧  
❧ THE NAVY,

(Of the EVANGELIZATION SOCIETY 21 Surrey Street, Strand, London, W.C.)

WITH  
An Introduction

BY  
CAPTAIN W. E. SMITH.

Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society.

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## INTRODUCTION.

—:O:—

A FRIENDSHIP of upwards of twenty-five years with dear William Taylor makes it a pleasure to respond to the request of his son that I should write a few lines of introduction to the record he has drawn up of his father's life.

William Taylor was widely known and loved for many years as "Taylor the Navvy," or the Navvy Preacher of the Evangelization Society. The many friends, whom he gained by his genial manner and attractive preaching of the Gospel, will doubtless welcome a memoir of their friend, and read with great interest the account of his life now presented to us.

I trust it will have a wide circulation both among those who, like Taylor, are engaged in work for God, and among those whom he loved so well and knew so well how to attract—the working men of this country.

Taylor's removal by death is an irreparable loss to the Society with which he was so long connected. His sympathy with working men and women; his quaint manner and unconventional mode of speech; his apt illustrations; his language always within the comprehension of the most ignorant; his hearty earnestness, never failed to command large audiences of a class seldom seen in a place of worship; while his faithful presentation of the Gospel, free from all sensationalism, was used of God to bring hundreds of that class from darkness to light.



But I desire to speak not only of his service. It is more easy to preach the Gospel than to live it, and it is a happy thing for us that the Lord sometimes calls us apart from active work to learn of Him in solitude.

Looking back over the years of my friendship with William Taylor, I like to remember not only how he taught others, but still more how the Lord taught *him*. Especially towards the end, during the years that he was an invalid, his growth in grace was very noticeable, and the fruits of the Spirit became more and more manifest in his life and character.

May God grant to all of us who read this sketch, not only to be stirred up to greater earnestness of service, but to seek also to grow in grace and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by a holy, prayerful, and consistent life.

It is right that I should say that I have had no hand in drawing up this sketch, nor have I even been able to revise it.

WILLIAM E. SMITH,  
*Honorary Secretary.*

EVANGELIZATION SOCIETY,  
21 Surrey Street, Strand, London.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

—:o:—

THE **Reasons** for publishing the following pages are two. (1) It was my father's intention to do so. He had already dictated to his son-in-law (Mr. W. Dixon, of Gordon School, Kingston-on-Thames) that part dealing with his early life, conversion, and joining the Evangelization Society. (2) It has been urgently called for by many of his friends and others interested in Gospel work among the masses, who consider that the record of such a life of faith and usefulness should not be lost.

The **Purpose** of the book, is to bring before the unconverted a remarkable trophy of Divine Grace; to show them what they may become under its influence; to point out the fact that God often takes the most unlikely instruments and makes them highly successful in the extension of His kingdom; and to encourage Christian workers never to despair, for the God who saved a Saul of Tarsus, a John Bunyan, and a "Taylor the Navvy" is "able to save to the uttermost."

The great bulk of the work has been done without fee or reward by Mr. W. Dixon, to whom is due a deep debt of gratitude for his unwearied efforts, in addition to the heavy and responsible work of his school. To him, we

know it has been a "work of faith and labour of love." A bond of great affection existed for many years between him and my father.

Grateful thanks must also be rendered to Captain W. E. Smith, of the Evangelization Society, for the Introduction he so readily consented to write. It speaks for itself. For 25 years he was my father's truest and most respected friend. During his long connection with the above Society many very tempting offers were made to him for service elsewhere, but to them all he turned a deaf ear, continually saying to his family, "I shall never leave Captain Smith."

The Committee of the Evangelization Society are also heartily thanked for placing at our disposal (through Captain Smith) most valuable correspondence concerning some of my father's missions in various places.

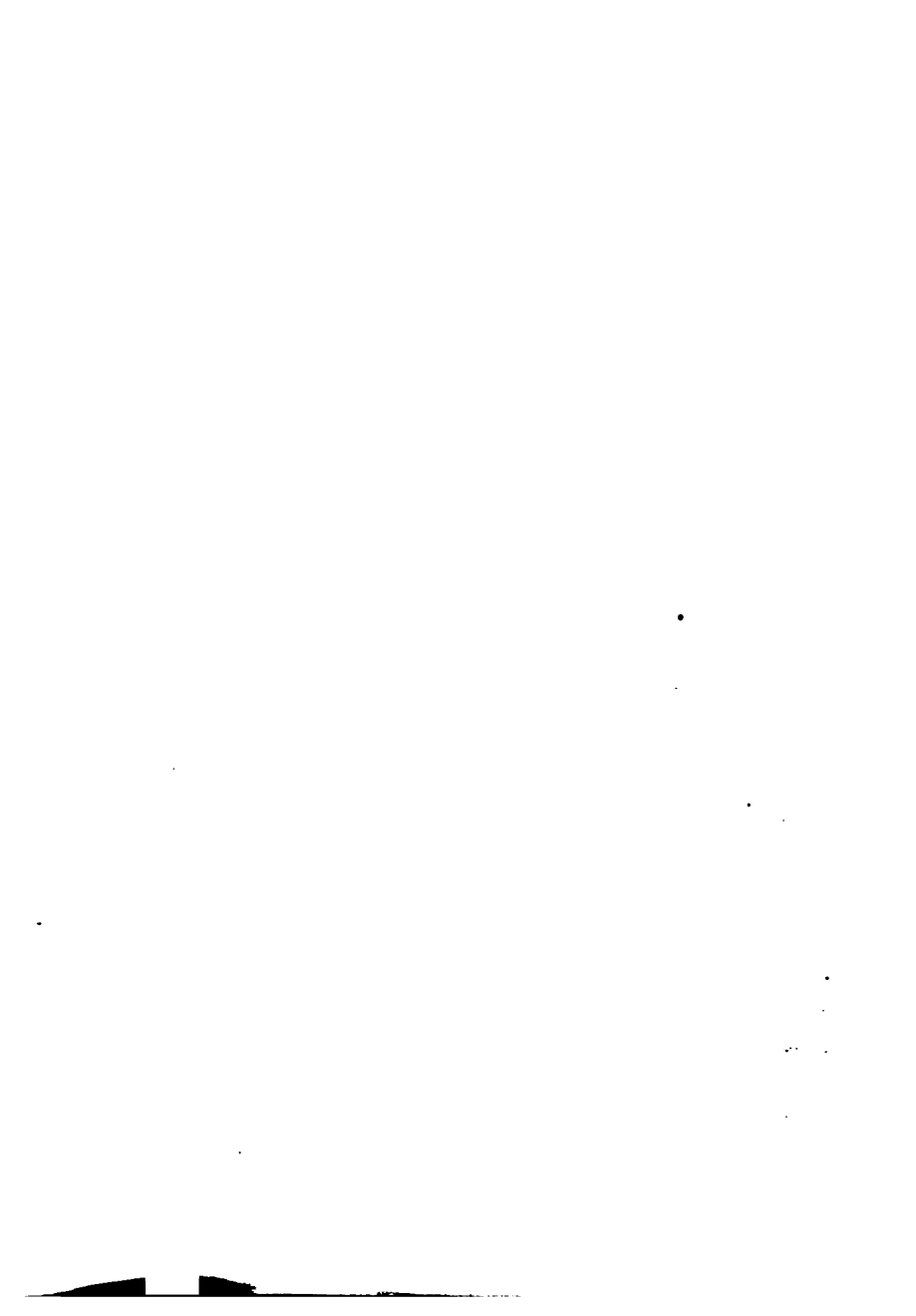
Mr. T. H. Stockwell has rendered very able and valuable assistance in the preparation of the book for the press, which we desire to specially and cordially recognize.

W. J. TAYLOR.

1892.

# CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE.
I.	Youthful Days and Serious Impressions,....	9
II.	Led Astray by Evil Companions,.....	21
III.	From Darkness into Light,.....	30
IV.	Clouds and Sunshine,.....	39
V.	The Colporteur at Work,.....	48
VI.	Prayer answered. Taylor as a Speaker,....	55
VII.	From Colporteur to Evangelist,.....	63
VIII.	A Flowing Tide of Success,.....	73
IX.	Eventful preaching tours,.....	83
X.	Some fruits of his work,.....	92
XI.	His power over the working-classes,.....	101
XII.	As a Temperance advocate among the rabble,	119
XIII.	Interesting family event. Work amongst the soldiers,.....	128
XIV.	Tact rewarded. Failing health,.....	140
XV.	Eventide. His sons at work,.....	152
XVI.	His death,.....	158
XVII.	Conclusion,.....	163
XVIII.	The secret of William Taylor's success,....	174





# WILLIAM TAYLOR

## "THE NAVVY."

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### CHAPTER I.

#### YOUTHFUL DAYS AND SERIOUS IMPRESSIONS.

**I**N the county of Northamptonshire, close to the borders of Oxfordshire, there is a pretty village called Middleton Cheney. Remote from the busy din of town or city life, it afforded at the time from which this narrative dates, a good specimen of rural England. Within the last half-century, but little difference has been made in its general appearance. To the traveller returning for a peep at the home of his childhood, it is still Middleton Cheney. True, people he once knew are missing, but the place itself remains much the same as when a school boy, he roamed the ploughed fields, paddled in the brook, or climbed the trees of yonder orchard. In this village stood a cottage, rather larger in size than any of the surrounding buildings. Once a farmer's homestead, it came to be occupied by an agricultural labourer and his family. William Taylor was

a hard-working and trustworthy peasant, as is proved by the fact that his services were continued on the one farm for upwards of forty years. He was a type of many of his class who, at the present day, are striving to gain an honest living in the face of a prolonged agricultural depression. Taylor was in receipt of wages to the amount of ten shillings weekly, an allowance which was then considered liberal. With this modest income, he managed to pay his rent and keep the wolf from the door.

It was under these circumstances, and in this cottage, in the year 1834, that a son, named after his father, first saw the light. He was his parent's third child, two sisters having preceded him. At the rear of his birthplace was an orchard, the fruit of which in good seasons brought considerable help towards paying the rent of the dwelling. The first steps of little William were often guided by a kind mother's hand into this orchard. With his baby fingers he plucked the fruit from the branches, many of which, at autumn, were as he remembered, borne almost to the ground by the weight of their harvest. Precious were the memories of his early days, when he himself became a parent and a stern toiler for his daily bread. And have not the departed years sanctified reflections for most of us? As we review the days of long ago we seem to become



WILLIAM TAYLOR AS A PREACHER, 1890.





young again. Once more we tread with light elastic step, the beaten path of our childhood, and chase the laughter-loving comrades across the sunlit meadows. But the eye grows quickly damp when faces now no more on earth, pass in fancy's panorama before us, and the melody of voices stilled in death seems sounding in our ears.

How the years roll by ! So the subject of our present sketch was accustomed frequently to think and speak. The little Northamptonshire village was somehow an inspiration to him to the very end of his days.

After what has been said, it will be easy for the reader to picture the early life and circumstances of William Taylor, who in later days came to be popularly known as the "converted navvy," and working-man evangelist. That he should have possessed a robust physique need not be wondered at in view of the health-giving surroundings of his boyhood. In Middleton Cheney his first few years were spent, and they remained ever memorable to him by the Christian fortitude which his parents displayed under circumstances of exceptional trial. When old enough, young Taylor was sent to a small school in the village, kept by an old man. His school-days were, however, few, as the

benefits of a good education, were then generally speaking, but little understood or appreciated. He was only seven years old when he first joined his father in the battle of life. The old schoolmaster had cared but little for the boys or their training, so long as he secured the pence regularly on the Monday morning, and, to tell the truth, the boys troubled as little about him. Such faulty scholastic training as Taylor received, added to a natural aversion to school-life, naturally proved a great barrier to his progress. Hence it came about that William Taylor was a self-taught man.

As already mentioned, when the lad was but seven years of age, his father considered it high time that his son should turn out to help him. The good man had then five children, all under ten years of age, to maintain, and also a roof to keep above their heads, out of a total income of only ten shillings a week. And though, at this time, his son could do but little, yet that little was an acceptable aid towards discharging the ever-recurring rent. His mother appears to have been glad to get rid of him, as the lad showed a tendency to all kinds of mischief. Perhaps this was the more noticeable by reason of his being the only son. William also manifested a very strong and determined will, which often proved difficult to curb, and rendered him at times well-nigh unmanageable. This wilful

temperament was naturally the cause of much anxiety to his parents, who, in fact, went so far as to prophesy all kinds of evil in regard to him. Had God left the boy to himself, the probability is that his record would have been a dark one, but the loving Saviour in His own good time took captive the head-strong youth, and turned his impetuous, and unflinching will, to good account in the highest service.

Young Taylor's first work of any consequence was that of helping his father to thresh-corn in a barn. As may be supposed, he was set to do this, not so much because of any adaptability he had shown for the work, as for the fact that he was thereby constantly kept under a vigilant eye. He was also set to scare crows, but finding this duty irksome to his active disposition, the boy managed to escape it. One great advantage connected with his early days, and one upon which he looked back with feelings of gratitude, was the insistence by his parents upon his regular attendance at the village Sunday School. It was there he learnt the lesson which he never forgot,—“God is love.” The style of teaching that William got at home was according to the light his parents had received. Though at that time unconverted, they were strictly moral people. Unfortunately, however, their son William was not one of the best of lads at Sunday

School. He appears to have been a restless type of boy, one whose counterpart unhappily exists in most Sabbath School classes to-day. It appears that young Taylor was unfortunately put into a class in company with ten other lads, mainly of a disposition too much akin to his own. The result was soon seen in continual disorder, and annoyance to the rest of the school. Three times Taylor was expelled with others, and as often did the kind superintendent, with dim hopes of future improvement, receive them back again. All the male teachers were tried in turn to subdue this unmanageable class, but with scant success. At last a lady appeared upon the scene, Mrs. Horn by name; she was the wife of an engineer engaged in planning out a railroad then under construction about two miles distant. It was during her temporary residence in this district, that hearing the Sunday School required help, she offered her services. These were gladly accepted, and the superintendent, being at his wit's end to know what to do for the best, put her in charge of this notorious class. So marked was this good lady's influence over these rough lads, that from the time she took possession till called to another sphere of labour, the class, much to the superintendent's delight, became about the most quiet and orderly in the school. That Mrs. Horn exercised great

personal influence over Taylor cannot be doubted, and Sunday School teachers who may happen to read this book should be encouraged to know that the whole of the boys in that class, with but one exception, gave clear proof of their conversion. Some have since crossed Jordan's stream, and entered into rest, while a few have developed into preachers of the Gospel, and are labouring in various parts of the world.

Whilst Mrs. Horn was in charge of Taylor's class, a memorable incident occurred which was destined to exercise an important influence over his future life. One Sunday, the minister who preached at the little village chapel, chose for his text Romans x. 4,—“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” This sermon appears to have been the first that Taylor ever paid any serious attention to, and certainly the only one that had made any lasting impression on him up to that time. The text was graven upon his mind by the Spirit of God. Nearly all that night he continued repeating it, though he could not grasp its meaning. Determined to find out if possible what this ever-present Scripture meant, he went to a woman named Charlotte, who lived next door. This person was rather a curiosity in the village, as she professed to be able to explain people's dreams and other so-called

tokens of good or evil. She was withal a kindly personage, and always had a word of comfort for the troubled and distressed. Young Taylor thought that here, at all events, he should find what he so much desired to know, about that text. If old Charlotte could not explain it, no one could. He began thus: "Charlotte! What is the meaning of this text, 'Christ is the end of the law?'" "Boy!" she replied, "why do you ask me that question?" "WHY?" said Taylor, "the parson preached from it yesterday, and I cannot get it out of my head anyway, and I want to know what it means." The old woman eyed him curiously, for she wondered greatly that a boy of Taylor's stamp should be thinking about a Scripture text. For a long time past, painful experience had driven her to the conclusion that all he was fit for was bird-stoning, fruit-stealing, and such-like mischief. Seeing however, that he was in earnest, she braced herself up to answer him as best she could. For truth to tell, the text puzzled her as much as it did the boy. "My lad," she said, "you see, it is as simple as that two and two makes four." But Taylor who as yet did not see the simplicity, further inquired, "How so?" "Do you know the Commandments?" queried Charlotte. "No," was the reply; for William well remembered the punishment he had received for ignorance

in this matter. "Ah, then," said old Charlotte, "you must learn them, and keep them as near as you can all through life. You may fail a little, but still, if you do the best you can, what you fail in, Christ will come in at the end of your life and make up, and so he will become the end of the law to you for righteousness, and will take you to heaven when you die." On hearing this version of the text, Taylor went away with a sad heart, thinking that what the old lady had said, must be true, and that therefore there would be slight hope of his getting to heaven. In the first place, he had not tried to do the best he could, and secondly he had no desire to do the best he could in the future. Therefore he said, "Farewell to heaven, for I shall never get there." William Taylor always had vivid remembrances of his feelings at that time, when he realized, according to this old woman's teaching, that he was shut out from a better and higher life. He was often wont to say: "Is not old Charlotte's advice the sort some people are giving anxious souls to-day?" And he would quote with emphasis this verse:

Cast your deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesu's feet;  
Stand in Him, in Him alone,  
Gloriously complete.



By this time, serious impressions had undoubtedly been made on Taylor's mind, with the result that he resolved to do better in future. But unfortunately, his good resolutions yielded only small fruit. And what else could be expected when a sinful disposition held the reins? At this time he began to work on the railroad close to the village. The company he then found himself amongst, as may be imagined exercised a very adverse influence upon his efforts for self-improvement. When this railroad was finished he was about fourteen years of age. Being able to earn a shilling a day at this work, as compared with the three-pence a day he had previously got at the farm, he determined not to return to the farming again, but to look further afield for a still higher wage; and from this time he became a wanderer.





## CHAPTER II.

### LED ASTRAY BY EVIL COMPANIONS.

**W**ILLIAM TAYLOR all his life through, well remembered the morning when he packed up his little bundle of food and clothes, and prepared to leave home and enter the outside world, with its many possibilities and uncertainties. His ideas were however bright, and he cared not to reckon in advance with sorrows and trials.

The village was soon left behind, and he proceeded on his way to Aylesbury, where he managed to find work in the brickfields, but here also he had the misfortune to meet with, and make companions of men whose influence was of the very worst character. Public-house associations, swearing mates, and Sunday ramblings, laid the foundation, during a two years' residence, of some prodigal years. Like many others he commenced by "walking" with the ungodly ; then continued "standing" in the way of sinners.

until ultimately he was found "sitting" in the seat of the scornful. Surely, at this critical point, Satan was doing his best to bind the future evangelist with unyielding chains, and was, alas! tolerably successful for a season.

During his stay at Aylesbury, Taylor received a solemn warning by the sudden death of one of his mates, a lad of about his own age. This unfortunate youth fell into one of the deepest ponds in the brickfields, and no help being at hand, was drowned. Taylor had been conversing with him only a few minutes before. On walking casually past the pond, he saw his mate's cap floating on the water. Realizing at once what had happened, he shouted for help, but before the necessary aid arrived, his young friend had perished. In the presence of this solemn event, as he gazed upon the pale face of the dead, he once more determined then and there, to lead a better life. He tried hard for some days to keep this resolve, but thinking about what old Charlotte had told him, to do the best he could, he at last, like hundreds more, found the task too hard, and gave it up in despair. The evil influence of the other labourers doubtless helped considerably to this end. It was none the less evident, however, that this time Taylor was deeply concerned about his soul. His inner eyes had not as yet beheld Jesus as his Saviour, neither could he

understand how God's all-sufficient grace could meet every spiritual need of sinful man. He quitted Aylesbury with a troubled heart, and returned to his village home to see his friends once more. The wanderer received a hearty welcome to the family circle, where his absence had been a source of long and anxious solicitude. When his kind old father wanted to know what advantage he had gained by leaving his native place, the prodigal replied that he had learned something, and said moreover, that he intended to go away again. Despite many paternal expressions of misgiving in regard to his past experience, young Taylor's decision to once more leave home could not be turned.

After a short stay therefore in Middleton Cheney, he accordingly left, on this occasion turning his face towards London, about which he had heard so much. The metropolis seemed to him then and ever afterwards a great attraction, and though in after years, he occasionally paid visits to his home and friends, yet the hub of the universe soon secured his presence again. This was accounted for by the fact that plenty of work could usually be found on the railroads, or in connection with other public works, then in course of construction in the suburbs of the city. But, there was yet another force exerting a powerful though unseen influence upon William Taylor, in thus

directing his steps. As coming events made clear, a gracious providence o'ershadowed him especially concerning the salvation of his immortal soul, and in preparing him to be a preacher of the glorious Gospel to many thousands of his fellow-men. Not a few incidents could be related respecting his long walks to and from London in search of employment; suffice it to say that in all these wanderings William Taylor felt there was yet something wanting to make him truly happy, though he had sought for this much desired blessing in various ways of his own. The unpossessed treasure was the *one thing needful*, the indwelling of Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, in his heart.

We have now arrived at a solemn yet blessed point in his history, viz., that of his conversion to God, and subsequent call to service for the King. On the occasion of his visit to the old village home in 1854, he found a wife in one whom he had known almost from childhood's earliest days. At the time of their marriage, both husband and wife were unconverted, knowing nothing experimentally of the grace of God. But a retrospect of their 37 years of married life makes it plainly evident that an unerring and over-ruling hand had led William Taylor to a right choice in this, as in many other matters. His partner proved herself admirably

fitted to be the helpmeet of one who was destined to do the work of an evangelist. After their marriage they remained in the old village about eighteen months. Seeing there was but little hope of his ideas of progress being realized in this quiet hamlet, Taylor determined to pack up his few things, and start for London again, where he felt certain of getting work. A short time previously, his first child, a boy, had been born. It will probably interest the reader to know that this son, W. J. Taylor, is now a well-known evangelist, having for fourteen years been an acceptable preacher of the Gospel in connection with the Evangelization Society.

William Taylor decided, at the time alluded to, to go alone to London in search of employment, leaving his wife and child to follow when he had provided some kind of home for them. He left Middleton Cheney, as he was wont afterwards to tell, an unsaved man, without God or hope in the world. At the close of a weary journey, most of it performed on foot, he duly arrived in the suburbs of the great city, and was fortunate enough to secure almost immediate employment as a navvy on the Hampstead Junction Railway, then under construction. About three weeks after his arrival, having provided himself with a home, he sent for his wife and child. Possessed of

great energy and determination, and also being a good workman, Taylor rarely found himself out of work, either during summer or winter. Like most of his fellows, he and his little family occasionally experienced hard times, accompanied with much distress. They lived then in one of the huts erected for the labourers on the works. This shelter though small and unpretending, was by a wife's industry, soon changed into a clean little home. It was while Taylor was working here, that the turning point of his life came, and the hour struck for the accomplishment of his salvation, and the buckling on of God's armour.

The following incident connected with, and leading up to his conversion, has been often told to crowded audiences with very blessed results. A lady whose name was quite unknown to Taylor,—but who according to information received while these pages have been in progress, seems to have died in Lowestoft, at about the same time as that of his death—used to make a practice of regularly visiting the navvies engaged on this railway, leaving tracts, etc., at their huts and speaking a kind word to the men and their wives whenever possible. This good work she resolutely continued, even in the most inclement weather. Often would she plunge through mud and snow to fulfil her self-appointed mission of love. Small, if any, results appeared to follow



WILLIAM TAYLOR AS A NAVY, 1860.





her efforts so far as she was able to judge. Like many another such weary worker to-day, she often returned home disappointed, and cast down. There was, however, unknown to her, at least *one* rough navvy who entertained such thoughts as these :—" This lady comes through all this mud, slush, and snow, to speak to us about this Jesus. There *must* be *something* real in it, or I am sure she would not trouble herself to come." The lady's noble and self-denying example was a message in itself, and began to tell most powerfully on the Middleton Cheney navvy, who felt painfully uneasy and dissatisfied with himself, for he was still a slave to sin. At last he decided to try and turn over a fresh leaf, and be better. Then he thought about old Charlotte's advice tendered so long ago. The neglected commandments gave him no peace, and he was driven to further depths of sin. He would often try to drown his troubled thoughts in drink, and in the company of wicked mates.



## CHAPTER III.

### FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT.

**I**N one of his sinful froaks Taylor joined thirty companions one Saturday night in a raffle for a watch. What took place on that occasion may be briefly stated in Taylor's own words—"Raffling led to drinking; drinking led four of us to fighting; and fighting led four policemen to lock the fighters up in Hampstead Police Station." Unfortunately, Taylor was amongst the number. On the Monday morning the men were brought up at Highgate Police Court, and fined 5s. 6d. each. They were, moreover, bound in a £10 bond to keep the peace for three calendar months. This discreditable affair was happily the climax of Taylor's wild career. On his return home on that sad Monday he used to describe how he looked at his sorrowful wife, and little child, and thought, "If I fight again I have no £10 to pay for a broken bond, and shall surely have to suffer imprisonment for breach of the law. What then will

become of my wife and child, who will be left to the mercy of others worse than myself?"

As he stood there considering the matter, his wife remarked, "Ah; Will! Have you heard the news?" "What news?" "Why, Harry the tip-driver has been killed this morning. He had asked the ganger to let him off to come and see how you four got on at the court, but he could not be spared, though it would have been a blessing if the poor fellow had obtained leave. They only took him off dead about an hour ago." This solemn news, together with Taylor's late ill-luck, and accusing conscience, made him again resolve, as he had often done before, to lead a different life. He seriously asked himself, "Can I do better?" And then came the resolve, "I'll try again."

The first Sunday after being brought up at court, Taylor was going up Hampstead Heath in his navvy clothes for a quiet walk "to turn himself a bit," and ease his troubled mind. As he passed by a little hall, he heard singing, which brought him to a standstill at the door. Listening attentively, he recognized at once the strains of a familiar hymn he had learnt in the Sunday School many years before. His attention was now fairly engaged, and he thought he would make his way inside, and see what was going on. Creeping cautiously through the doorway, in

order not to attract attention, he got into a seat in the darkest corner, and sat down. The familiar hymn ceased. Then three or four working-men, one after the other, delivered short and earnest appeals to those present, telling of their deliverance from the folly, misery, and wretchedness of sin, and the joys experienced since they had known the Lord. They had at least *one* eager hearer, over in the dark corner. As Taylor listened to those testimonies he said to himself, "That's the joy I want; the joy these men talk about. Where, oh where, can I find it?" Sergeant Harris of the Hampstead police, now superannuated from the force, was amongst the speakers, but was dressed in private clothes. He had seen the navvy come in, and recognized him, though Taylor did not know the officer at first. After the meeting closed, Harris went to the navvy, and much to the latter's surprise, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said earnestly, "This God we serve can save *you*, my friend." Taylor at once recognized the policeman as the one who had locked him up a few weeks before. Though rather taken aback at this odd meeting, and wondering for a moment what he had done that the constable should want him again, he recovered himself, and replied, "Can He? Then I'd like to be saved to-night." "Come aside into this little room," said the sergeant, "and

we will show you the way to Heaven." The following dialogue then ensued :—

*Taylor* : " Ah ! if you can show me the way to heaven as clear as you showed me the way to the lock-up, I'll start on it to-night. But you must know I have not kept the commandments."

*Sergeant* : " And who has ? "

*Taylor* : " But I aint done the best I could."

*Sergeant* : " None of us have either."

*Taylor* : " How am I to be saved, then ? "

*Sergeant* : " Do you know you are a guilty sinner ? "

*Taylor* : " I do."

*Sergeant* : " Then you are just the character for whom Jesus died."

*Taylor* : (thinking of the old text) : " How is Christ become ' the end of the law for righteousness ? ' "

*Sergeant* : " Listen to me. When men break the laws of the land, the law punishes. The other day you did wrong, and the law made you pay for it. Suppose you had had no money to pay, what would you have done then ? "

*Taylor* : " Why I should have gone to prison, of course."

*Sergeant* : " Just so. But suppose the magistrate gave you another chance, and paid the 5s. 6d. for you. What then ? "

*Taylor* : " Of course I should go free."

*Sergeant*: "Look here my friend, (referring to Isaiah liii. 5.) it says, '*He* was wounded for *our* transgressions, etc.'"

Four other men then came into the room, and all started praying so earnestly that, as the evangelist himself declared, he thought they were going to bring heaven down on his behalf. Much impressed, but not yet saved, Taylor wended his way homeward. The fact that Jesus had actually borne his sins seemed too good to be true, and his heart still remained heavy-laden with guilt. His kind friend, the Sergeant, came part of the way home with him and asked him the question, "Can you trust this Jesus?"; but Taylor was not prepared to say he could. Before parting however, the Sergeant begged him to promise that he would kneel down before his wife, and ask God to save him. This was a great task for the rough navvy to undertake, but after some little delay, he promised, and kept his word.

When he got home his wife was anxious to know where he had been, as she feared he had perhaps got into more trouble. Her husband replied, "I've been to the House of God, and I'll tell you where else I mean to go." "Where?" said his now astonished wife. "Why, I mean to go to heaven." With these words, he dropped upon his knees

and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But he got no peace that night. His poor wife could not understand what sort of a religion this was that had taken such a strong hold upon her husband; and yet something seemed to tell her that brighter and happier days were dawning. Next morning, she said, "Will! Do you really mean what you said last night?" "I do, wife," he replied. "Then I'll be one to help you all I can, but," she continued, "You'll have a lot of chaff from your mates." "Never mind," replied the navvy, "it won't be more than the past misery I've been in. Nothing shall satisfy me till God has saved me and made me like those men at the meeting." The good woman was quite correct about the chaff, for that day Taylor got well laughed at to start with. Immediately he arrived at his work in the morning, his mates were clubbing round for what is known among navvies as a "fetching of beer." Taylor was of course asked to join as usual. But his views had changed since the last occasion, and he replied, "No, I intend to give it up and start for heaven." This unlooked-for remark caused a hearty laugh amongst the navvies standing round. Taylor however had come to recognize the fact that beer-drinking put an almost insuperable barrier in the way of his soul's salvation. The suddenness of his declarations



caused some of his mates to question whether he hadn't gone mad. Others would exclaim, "Hullo! has Billy turned a Methodist then?" It is always a matter of surprise to sinners when one of their number declares his or her intention to quit the old sinful life, and follow Jesus. But well it is with those who, like William Taylor, can say :

" My old companions, fare ye well :  
I will not go with you to hell,  
I mean with Jesus Christ to dwell,  
Let me go."

When the burst of laughter had ceased, most of Taylor's mates began to speculate as to how long he was likely to hold out. Some gave him a week, others a fortnight, and one was bold enough to make a bet that Taylor would be at the " Swiss Cottage " public-house, playing cards again, within a month. This was but the commencement of a series of continued persecutions, which Taylor happily had grace enough to bear patiently.

When he returned home that day he began to make alterations for the better in his home life. His wife thought him strange, and his neighbours called him a fool, but the navvy persevered in his good intentions day after day, for he believed he was on the right track for a good life. He

also at this time began to feel he could no longer continue to work on the Sabbath Day. So, by a little arrangement with the ganger, he used to work late into the nights during the week to avoid working on the Lord's day. And in many other ways did the rough navvy show that he was determined to be a different man. The reader must remember that he had not as yet found peace through believing. This anxious period of about three weeks, was a time of great mental distress and deep anxiety of soul. Taylor, though he believed, yet longed for a fuller assurance of salvation. And the gracious Lord did not much longer leave His future messenger in this state of doubt and anxiety. The light dawned at last, and the shadows were dispelled by the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings."

One memorable morning, (during the winter of 1859-60). when at work in the railway-cutting, on the spot where Finchley Road Station now stands, Taylor found himself meditating with great delight and interest of soul on God's love to a guilty world. Then and there, the Lord graciously revealed Jesus to him as his own precious Saviour, and he felt he could fully trust Him, and that the weight of his sins had rolled away. A glorious joy took possession of the poor navvy there upon the projected line of railway. Even

as the bitten Israelites of old raised their weary eyes to behold the uplifted serpent, and found life in that look, so did William Taylor, amid all those rough and unseemly surroundings, look to the Cross, and behold the dying form of one who suffered there for him, and all who would likewise believe. That look brought life, and with it also came the overflowing gratitude of a grateful heart. Leaping quickly into vivid remembrance, came the sweet verse learned long ago at school :

“Oh for such love, let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break ;  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Saviour's praises speak.”

He immediately dropped the sprag he was using, and rushed to his hut, calling to his astonished wife at the highest pitch of his voice, “Thank God I've got it ! The Lord has saved me ! The Lord has saved me !” From that day to the day of his death, William Taylor was able to rejoice in his Saviour with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory. He was also enabled, by God's grace, to speak to many of that deep and abiding happiness which is found only in Jesus.



## CHAPTER IV.

### CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

**T**AYLOR'S wife, after a time seeing that her husband's conversion was undoubtedly genuine, became very anxious herself, and declared that she would not rest till God had saved her also. Only eighteen months passed before she too, found peace in believing. Like many more, she had been brought up under the false teaching of "Do this and live," instead of "Believe and be saved." For old Charlotte, referred to previously, was her mother, and had duly trained her in the same principles that had proved such a hindrance to her husband. Some time after Taylor's conversion, Charlotte came to London to see him. Noticing his happy face, and his evident change of heart, she asked the reason of it. He thereupon told her of the false teaching she had given him years before, and how he had nevertheless received salvation through simply trusting in

Jesus. This testimony was blessed by God to her soul, for it caused her to be deeply anxious, with the ultimate result that she herself was led to a real trust in the Saviour. She was shortly afterwards called to pass "through the valley of the shadow of Death," and it is cause for deep thankfulness to her friends that her latter end was peace.

William continued to work on the railway for some time after his conversion, and as may be readily imagined, he experienced severe and bitter persecutions. But he always found that the Lord who had saved him was also able to keep him from falling, and so he continued to stand fast, proving himself a faithful soldier of the Lord Jesus. Shortly after his conversion, the Hampstead Junction Railway was finished, and on removing thence he fortunately secured employment on the Great Western Railway Improvement Works at Wormwood Scrubbs, Notting Hill. Finding himself amongst strangers there, Taylor felt it was his duty to make himself known as a Christian. He lived at this time in the Latimer Road, Notting Hill, one of the most degraded neighbourhoods of the London suburbs.

As yet, no city missionary had established himself there, and, furthermore, very few places of worship existed. Taylor was consequently led to open his humble dwelling

for a prayer-meeting one night each week. For some time however, he could only get one man named Humphreys, a sawyer, to join him. Neither of them were able to give out a hymn, or even to read the Bible correctly, but Taylor could pray, and very soon his mate followed suit. Surely angels might well have rejoiced at the sight of those two rough labouring men kneeling in solemn devotion at the mercy seat. Humphreys was a truly Christian man, and until the day of his death, which occurred about two years afterwards, he remained one of Taylor's firmest friends. The evangelist was never tired of relating the death-bed scene of his faithful companion on the way to heaven, and the story has been greatly blessed to many souls. Especially used he to speak of the last night he saw him, and of how, when shaking his thin wasted hand and bidding him farewell, he put the question, "Are you ready and willing to go?" "Yes, brother," joyfully replied the dying man, "I am waiting and longing to be for ever with the Lord."

Early the following morning Taylor went over to his old friend's house to see if he was still alive. Humphrey's mother opened the door, and by her weeping, Taylor rightly judged that his friend had passed away. "My poor

boy has gone !” tearfully muttered the stricken mother. “No,” replied Taylor, “He’s not poor, but rich ; for he’s in heaven. What were his last words ?” “I stood by his bed at two o’clock this morning,” she answered, “watching his painful breathing. He was looking with eager eyes at some part of the ceiling, and with a cheerful voice he said, “Mother, come here.” “I am here, my boy,” I replied. “I want you to put your cheek against mine, mother.” I did so, and he pointed to where he had been looking, and said, “Mother ! can’t you see them angels ?” I replied, “No, my boy,” but I felt a bit frightened, as I knew I was in the presence of God. He kept like that for a few minutes, when, with a bright beaming smile, he said, pointing with his finger, “Can’t you see them, mother ? Why there they are !” and then he said with his dying voice:

“Bright angels, are from glory come,  
They’re round my bed and fill my room,  
They wait to waft my spirit home,  
All is well ; all is well.”

Then he ceased to breathe, for his spirit had fled to its eternal home.” As Taylor gazed on the breathless form of his departed friend he exclaimed with feelings of deep emotion, “*May my last end be like his.*”

During Taylor's two years' acquaintance with his departed friend another incident happened which is worth recording. It was, in fact, the conversion of a man named Joseph Betts, who lived at Starch Green. Betts' subsequent zeal for the Lord and sterling Christian character, came to be well-known throughout the district. He was one of those whom Taylor induced to attend his little cottage meeting. One evening after their day's work was over, Taylor and Betts, in the course of a quiet walk, saw in the distance the lights of some place of worship, which they found to be Oakland's Chapel, Shepherd's Bush. Curious to know what was going on, they entered the building for the first time, and heard the gospel faithfully preached. Only a few persons were present that evening, but after the minister had finished, he invited anyone who was anxious, to come into the Vestry for spiritual conversation with him. Taylor's friend had not yet found the Lord, but was longing to be delivered from the thralldom of sin. Making use of what seemed a good opportunity, Taylor easily induced his friend to accompany him into the Vestry. The minister, whose name Taylor never knew, seeing these two rough working men before him, thus addressed them: "Well, What brings you here?" Taylor, acting as spokesman



replied, "My friend Joe, sir, wants to know the way to be converted." Politely handing the two men chairs, the good minister thus interrogated Joe: "Well Joe, what's the matter with you, then?" "I've got a weight at my heart, sir," answered Joe, "and want it shifted." "What does the weight consist of?" asked the man of God. "It's sin sir, it's sin." "But I can't remove weights," said the minister. "But," replied Joe, "I thought you could tell me of one who could, sir, and that's why we came in here." "Ah," said the minister, "I see you're in trouble because you've done wrong." "That's just it, sir," was the reply. He then told him of Jesus becoming our Substitute and dying in our stead at Calvary, and how God now forgives for Christ's sake those who, with all their soul and strength believe in Christ as their Substitute and Saviour. Joe believed but could not *realize* that he was forgiven. "Now," continued the minister, "you are like a little boy I knew, who was one day standing outside his father's house crying bitterly, and afraid to go in. A friend of mine who knew him came along just then, and said to the boy, 'Jim, what's the matter?'" "Oh, sir," said the youth, "Father's going to whip me and I am afraid to go in." "But," rejoined my friend, "your father is one of the

kindest men I know, and I am sure he would not whip you.”

“But he will, sir, I am sure,” replied the lad tearfully, “for he said if I did a certain wrong thing he’d whip me, and I’ve done it, and I know he will.” Seeing the lad’s distress, my friend said, “Well, I’ll go in, and see if I can persuade him not to punish you.” But the angry parent could not be persuaded not to punish the evil-doer. “You see, sir,” said he, “if I let him off, my other children will expect me to do the same with them, and my parental authority will be at an end.” “Well,” said my friend, “is there no other remedy? *Must* the lad be punished?” “Yes, most certainly,” was the reply. “Now,” said the gentleman, “will you take the whip and whip me *instead* of your son, and let the children know you kept your word?” “Certainly, if you wish it,” said the boy’s father, and he thereupon whipped the boy’s friend instead of the naughty son. The gentleman then went out and told the lad that he had been punished instead of him. But for a long time the boy could not be persuaded to believe that this was true. At last, however, when he went indoors, his father said he forgave him, as the gentleman had borne his punishment instead. The lad afterwards went and gratefully thanked his friend and benefactor.”

This may seem to many a long story to tell an anxious enquirer, but it nevertheless proved effectual in Joe Betts' case. All this time he was sitting there, listening with rapt attention, and drinking in every word. "Now Joe!" said the minister, when he had finished, "Would it have been right for the father to have punished the boy after the gentleman had been whipped for 'him'?" Clapping his two hands together, Joe exclaimed, "Thank God, sir, I see it! I see it! My burden is gone, sir." "How's that?" enquired the minister. "Why sir, it's because '*by His stripes we are healed.*'" The work of our Saviour in taking upon himself man's just punishment, had come upon Joe's soul like a flash, and he was now a new creature in Christ Jesus. When Taylor came home and described to his wife the manner of Joe's conversion, she herself exclaimed, "Thank God, I am saved then, and I wonder I did not see it before!" During the eighteen months following her husband's conversion his wife had been very anxious about her soul's welfare, but had not been able to realize the work of Christ on her behalf till this hour. Now all was clear, and the angels of heaven rejoiced over two more precious souls born into the kingdom of God.

Taylor's home now became more than ever a home of happiness, and the abode of that domestic felicity which has been its marked feature ever since. About this time Taylor and his family used to attend the meetings held at the Workmen's Hall, established by Captain and Mrs. Bayley, the latter of whom was the well-known authoress of "Ragged Homes, and how to mend them," as well as other useful books. Mr. Henry Varley, was at this time identified with the good work in progress at this Hall, and in him Taylor found a kind and wise counsellor. Mr. Varley's new tabernacle at Notting Hill was then under construction, and formed the subject of much comment at the time. These three servants of God were touched by the zealous and consistent life of the railway navvy, in whom they detected natural abilities, which, if properly directed, might prove exceedingly useful in the Lord's service. They accordingly cast about in order to find him, if possible, a more suitable field of labour where he might serve God without hindrance.





## CHAPTER V.

### THE COLPORTEUR AT WORK.

**A**T this time William Taylor was in deep trouble, for it had pleased God to take to Himself one of his children. What made the blow worse was the fact that he had, unfortunately, no money to give the child a decent funeral. That night he was engaged to preach at Mr. Mathieson's Hall, Hampstead. With a heavy heart the poor fellow tramped every step of the way to the meeting, for he could not afford to ride. Lifting his heart to the Lord in prayer, he left the trouble with Him, and preached as best he could. After the service was over Mr. Mathieson pressed something wrapped in paper into his hand, which Taylor thought was two shillings to pay his railway fare. When however, he got into the street, he found, to his surprise, that they were two bright sovereigns instead. With a light and joyful heart the navvy ran every

step of the way home and told his wife, who thankfully received the glad news that the Lord had sent money for the funeral.

Being in need of a colporteur, and the job Taylor was then engaged at being about finished, Captain and Mrs. Bayley were led to ask him if he would like to try colportage work. But as he had probably never heard of colportage work before, he naturally asked what it meant. When informed that it was employment in selling books, he at once strongly objected to enter upon it, remarking that he was more used to the pick and spade than to dealing with books. But Mrs. Bayley was not to be put off, as she believed Taylor was the right man for the work if he could only be got to start it. She told him to stop at home for three days and to make it a matter of prayer, and she would pay him for the time he lost; and if he took up the colportage work she would give him the same amount of remuneration as he was earning on the railway, even if he did not sell a single book at first. Taylor went home and prayed about the matter, and also thought it over very carefully. After three days he went again to the lady, feeling quite sure that he was not able to manage the work, and determined to have nothing to do with it. Arrived at Mrs. Bayley's

residence he found to his surprise that she had got the pack of books all ready for him to start with, and would simply not listen to a refusal. "Now Taylor," she said, "You must first of all take this money, and go off to Somerset House to get a license, for without that you will not be allowed to sell your books and papers." With these words she handed him the money for the license, and bade him go at once and get it. Seeing the lady was determined he should try the job, and not wishing to displease her, Taylor made up his mind to do the best he could, and started to get the license. This was not obtained without some amount of difficulty, as Taylor was quite ignorant of how to proceed in such a matter. When, however, he secured possession of the necessary document he resolved to start on his book-selling venture in right good earnest, and to give up railway work.

It is well perhaps at this point to mention the fact that Taylor's work as a navvy was thus ended, for he never more returned to that occupation. The Lord gradually opened up other fields of labour, in which the rough but simple working-man was destined to serve with much success. The next morning after obtaining the license, Taylor sallied forth, dressed in navvy clothes and

with his pack of books on his back, he commenced his new work of vending the Word of God and other good and useful books. His appearance at first gave rise to no small amount of ridicule, especially among some of his old mates. But this, so far from discouraging him, only made him all the more bold and determined to persevere in his new work for the Master. A public house, called the "North Pole," happened to be the nearest house at hand, and into this Taylor went, nothing daunted, and dropped his pack of books on the counter. After extending a friendly nod to the landlord by way of introducing himself, the colporteur asked him if he wanted any books, as he had some good ones to sell. The man replied with a very gruff "No," accompanied by a sneering laugh at the navvy's expense. But Taylor continued his visits from door to door, and after two days of persevering labour had the satisfaction of finding that fully £1 worth of books had been disposed of. This encouraged him immensely, and he went on to pursue his new vocation daily, with increasing success. His steady progress soon placed him beyond the need of Mrs. Bayley's kind help; and as she soon afterwards removed to Barnet, his connection with this kind and generous friend was from that time almost entirely cut off. After having been



eighteen months at the work, the colporteur succeeded in making a comfortable living out of it ; he had indeed formed quite a round of regular customers. Thus did the Lord own and prosper his humble efforts.

About this time a pleasing incident occurred. Taylor had a special regard for his father, and when he himself was converted, his thoughts were naturally at once directed to secure the salvation of his parents. Taylor knew the old man was quiet and steady in his habits, and that he attended a place of worship regularly on the Sabbath. This latter fact had made a special mark on William's mind, for his father used to take him to church when he was a boy, to give the parent a "wake up" when he went to sleep during the sermon, which breach of rule happened not unfrequently. Though old Mr. Taylor sat under the Gospel-call all his life, he as yet took little interest in the things of God. His son, however, had offered up daily prayer on his behalf for many years, believing that the answer would ultimately come. At length an opportunity occurred (under somewhat peculiar circumstances) for Taylor to again visit his native village. During his previous residence there, of the eighteen months succeeding his marriage, he got into debt to the amount of almost £9, and this was still owing

when he removed to London. The debt had troubled him little at *that* time, but after his conversion he and his wife determined that it should be paid. So they saved up their money—a little—week by week, until there was sufficient to meet all claims. Then, with a joyous heart, Taylor returned to Middleton Cheney, and settled all these long-standing liabilities. Some of the villagers asked him why he had come to pay his debts, as by this time they had almost forgotten them. He replied, that Christ his Saviour, commanded him to “owe no man anything,” and he had only obeyed the injunction. One woman whom Taylor owed £1 for rent, remarked, when handing him the receipt for it, “Well, I’ve heard of religion doing this kind of thing, but *I’ve never experienced it before.*” He then had the joy of preaching the Gospel on the village green where he had played as a boy.

While on this visit to his native place, the new colporteur had an opportunity of speaking to his father about the importance of deciding for Christ. The old man’s life had been in every sense sober, honest, moral, and respectable. But whilst the father evidently rejoiced in his son’s change of life, nothing seemed to move the old man to feel his *own* need of a Saviour. Taylor returned home with a resolve to

double his petitions to the Lord for his parents' salvation, especially for his father. As to his mother, Taylor had great hopes that she had already been savingly converted. At all events, he eventually had the joy of believing that she had died trusting in the Lord.





## CHAPTER VI.

PRAYER ANSWERED. TAYLOR AS A SPEAKER.

THE son still prayed on for his father, until one day a letter came from the village, asking what should be done with the old man, as he could not rest at night, but would jump up in his bed, and say to his wife, with tears running down his cheeks, "Ann, I'm a lost man, I'm a lost man." This caused great sorrow at home, but was most joyful news to Taylor. Arrangements were at once made to bring the old man to his son's home in London. On his arrival there, the sorrowful expression on his face was very marked. As soon as it was convenient, Taylor took his father aside, and laying his hands on his shoulders, said, "Father, what's the matter?" The old man burst into tears, and responded, "Will ! I'm a lost man." "That's it, is it ?" added the son. "Then I'm glad to hear it, for

'the Son of Man came to seek and to save that *which was lost*.'"

After much prayer and consideration for two or three days, the only thing the son could get from his father was still, "I'm a lost man." On the third day Mr. Henry Varley, passed the house, and was at once called in to tell the aged man how he could be saved. Mr. Varley was soon alone with the anxious enquirer, telling him the way of life. They had not been together more than half-an-hour, when the old man was able to trust Jesus as his own Saviour. The navvy's prayer was thus answered. The aged father coming out of the room, laid hold of his son with both hands, and joyfully exclaimed, "Will! it's true, it's true! but I was a long time before I could believe that the Son of Man came to seek and to save a poor lost sinner like me." Some years afterwards the old man passed quietly away to his rest. He died happy in the Lord and witnessed a good confession to the last.

At the time of his father's death William Taylor was conducting an encouraging series of services at the Oxford Town Hall, but he made time to follow his father's remains to the grave. It was no small amount of comfort for him to know that he had laid the loved one beneath the sod with

the sure and certain hope of resurrection unto eternal life.

Besides selling books in the daytime Taylor was in the habit of speaking in the open-air on summer evenings in conjunction with Mr. Varley and a London city missionary who had lately been stationed in this district. Taylor was often ridiculed by the bystanders for his bad grammar. In fact he was quite ready to own that in later years he not infrequently did violence to the Queen's English in some of his addresses. His work as a preacher of the Gospel now increased exceedingly, and nearly every night was spent at open-air or indoor gatherings. About this time our navvy set himself resolutely to learn to read and write, sitting up late after his day's work was over. It was a hard task, but he felt amply rewarded when, by-and-by, he found himself able to read the precious Word of God.

Amongst the scoffers met with at the open-air meetings addressed by Taylor was a man whom the evangelist in his own words referred to thus :—"We used to hold our meetings just in front of his door, where he often stood to sneer and laugh at us. Some kind ladies and gentlemen built a Mission-hall close by, in order that these meetings might be continued during the winter. Here the chief missionary and myself joined hand-in-hand in work for the

Lord. One night during the first winter of the Mission I was on my way to the hall to give an address, when I met a woman with a shawl around her head, crying bitterly. I did not know her, but she knew and spoke to me. 'Oh! Mr. Taylor,' she said, 'will you come and pray with my dear father? I'm afraid he will not live the night through.' I answered 'Yes, most gladly,' though I had no idea who the man was, or where he lived. The woman led the way, and to my great surprise, stopped at the door of our sneering friend of the summer months. She took me to the bedside, when I saw it was indeed the very man, lying at the point of death, and I spoke to him of Jesus, the sinner's friend. He looked up at me with eager eyes, but did not speak a word. I asked him questions about his soul, but received no reply. The woman told me that his speech had left him some hours before, and I now greatly feared it was a hopeless case. I asked if anyone had been to see him, and found that no one had. After speaking and praying with him for some time as best I could, I told him I must go as I was wanted at a meeting. As he could not speak I asked him to squeeze my hand if all was well with his soul, but I felt no response as his hand lay in mine. An awful look of despair then settled over his

face, and I felt I was in the presence of a man fast sinking into hell. I left him, promising to call again, which I did a few hours afterwards, but found that he had passed away. His daughter said his face was an awful picture, for it still bore the despairing look of one who knew he was lost for evermore." Taylor never could forget that awful look of despair on the man's face. "Be not deceived God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Behold, I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."

About one hundred yards from this sad scene and at about the same time, another man lay dying. He had been one of Taylor's mates in the navy's Aylesbury days. They had wrought together at the same works, and often slept together in the same house, and sung songs in the same public-house. But after Taylor's conversion this man avoided him, except on one occasion when the evangelist managed to get his unruly mate to the house of God. The man's heart was so hardened however, that from that day he determined to have nothing more to do with Taylor. For a long time he lost him altogether, until one day he heard that his old acquaintance had moved into the neighbourhood of the Mission Hall. Taylor thereby



hoped to succeed in getting him to hear the Gospel; but he was doomed to disappointment. Night after night he knocked at the door of his old companion's house, but was always told that he was not at home. This statement Taylor knew was untrue. Ere long a message came to him, asking if he would go and see this man, who, it was feared, was in a dying state, but had nevertheless, at the "eleventh hour" expressed an earnest desire to see his old mate. The latter was away from home at the time, but returned soon after, and proceeded with all haste to see the dying man. To his great sorrow he found on arriving at the house that the poor fellow was dead. The landlady then related to Taylor the following story:

"Tom was taken ill about a week since, but no one thought then that there was any danger. But four-and-twenty hours ago he asked me to go and fetch you to pray with him, as he believed he was dying. Many times he earnestly entreated me to go, but, not thinking the man was in danger, I laughed at him, and said: 'You would not see Taylor when you were well, and you are not going to die. I won't fetch him.' This morning he said, 'If you won't fetch my old mate, I'll fetch him myself,' and while I was out of the room the sick man actually got out

of bed, put on his clothes, and began to pull his boots on. While he was lacing them up, I came in ; but the exertion of getting up had proved too much for his feeble strength, and he fell over on the bed, gasping for breath. Seeing death stamped on his face, I hastened to fetch you without delay, though I never dreamed that death was so near. When I got back he still lay upon the bed, with his eyes turned toward the door. Seeing me enter without you, he gave one last despairing look, and expired. There he lies, sir, just as he died, for we have not moved him."

Taylor's eyes filled with tears as he gazed sadly at the remains of his old companion, and thought of the time when he heard him singing drunken songs in the street, to annoy people coming out of church. Taylor thought how true the good old Book is when it says, "The way of transgressors is hard," and "The wages of sin is death." He would have given anything to have spoken a few last kind words to his friend, but it could not be, and he often remembered with feelings of sorrow the sad end of his mavy-mate.

In the course of his bookselling journeys, Taylor often called on Mr Henry Varley, who gave him valuable counsel and sterling advice, which in after years proved of the

greatest utility to him as a preacher of the Gospel. Mr. Varley invited the navvy colporteur to his meetings, and got him to speak a few words to those present. Taylor thus received his early training as a speaker, and his natural abilities rapidly developed. Many old friends of the navvy will remember how in these early days of his career, when reading the Scriptures on the platform, he would, on coming to a difficult word, spell it out, and turn to someone, saying, "What does that spell?" He was never ashamed to learn of any one who could teach him what he did not know.

William Taylor was never in those early days of his career, ashamed to confess the Lord before men; but boldly proclaimed the Gospel wherever he went. He soon became a great favourite and very popular with all Christians who were actively engaged in spreading the Gospel message. He was at this time especially well-known in the North of London, but calls for his services began to come from Dover, Aldershot, Guildford, Oxford, Winchester, and other places.



## CHAPTER VII.

### FROM COLPORTEUR TO EVANGELIST.

**F**INDING Taylor both acceptable and successful in the preaching of the Gospel to the working classes, Mr. Varley recommended him to Captain W. E. Smith, who has now been for twenty-five years the Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society. At the time of which we speak, this Society had lately been formed, and Captain Smith was stationed at Hythe. This gentleman manifested much interest in evangelistic effort and instituted a meeting once every week at the Hythe Town Hall. In response to Mr. Varley's recommendation, Captain Smith invited Taylor to preach there, and in 1866 the evangelist delivered his first Gospel address in that place. As he was the only working-man preacher who had spoken at these meetings, it was a cause of some anxiety to Captain Smith to know how the experiment was likely to succeed; perhaps, however, not more so than to William Taylor himself. The result

was very encouraging to all concerned. The Hall was packed with people from end to end, the novelty of hearing a *navvy* preach, probably attracting a large number of those present; but one and all listened with rapt attention to what was said. Amongst those on the platform were a nobleman and several other gentlemen of high social position.

Taylor often spoke of that night as a memorable one in his history. If ever he trembled before an audience, it was on the occasion of his visit to Hythe. Nervous excitement caused his hands to shake, and his sight seemed so blurred that he could scarcely see to announce the first hymn. He took his text from Isaiah iii, 10th and 11th verses. "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him," etc. The preparation of this address had cost him no small amount of time and labour. The leading ideas were :

- (a) Two classes of people — believers and unbelievers ;
- (b) Two roads for the two classes, and their different endings ;
- (c) Two sides to the Judgment-throne ;
- (d) Two sentences from the Judge : "Come," and "Depart ;"
- (e) Two places of abode in Eternity—Heaven and Hell.

The evangelist, after many further years of experience, was ready to acknowledge that the plan of Salvation was not so clearly put in this first address as in those which he afterwards delivered. But he believed that some blessing followed the Word preached that night, for he did his best, and delivered the message faithfully, according to the light he had received. The navvy's simple testimony and appeals seemed acceptable to those present, and he was asked to come again. This led Taylor to believe that the Lord had blessed this first effort, and he went on his way with a joyful heart.

This occasional preaching at Hythe, and other places, led to twenty-five years of much-valued friendship and mutual labour with Captain Smith in connection with the Evangelization Society, of which the Captain became Honorary Secretary shortly after his acquaintance with Taylor. The latter's connection with the Society, together with the many calls he received to preach at various places, led him to believe it was the Lord's will for him to relinquish the colportage work, and devote himself entirely to the preaching of the gospel. After much careful consideration Taylor determined to take that step, and we shall now see him only in connection with the Evangelization

Society, which has, by God's blessing, done so much to spread the Gospel message throughout Great Britain. No one who is familiar with the Navvy evangelist's work during the last twenty-five years can have a shadow of doubt respecting the wisdom of his decision. That he was divinely guided has been plainly apparent. We shall now endeavour to give a few of the details of his work, and we trust that the record will glorify the blessed Master by proving a blessing to those who read it.

In the quiet and rest of his own fireside, William Taylor was always delighted to tell of his experiences in the mission-field. As an old soldier often in imagination fights his battles over again after his return to his native land, so did the Navvy Evangelist recite to his friends his conflicts with sin, and of victories won for his Lord and Master. As thousands had been thrilled by his eloquence in the public assembly, even so did the fireside group hang upon his graphic words. He was especially fond of telling about his early work with the Evangelization Society. In the year 1864 some friends had engaged the Regent Music-hall at Westminster for a few Sundays at a rental of £3 per night, and Taylor was invited to conduct the services. His fame was already on the increase, and many people

came to the opening meeting. Upon the platform were many well-known Christian gentlemen, including the late Mr. Robert Baxter, the late Earl Cavan, Admiral Fishbourne, the late Marquis of Cholmondeley, the late Mr. F. A. Bevan, and many others.

These had met in the ante-room for prayer before service, and the navy had entered almost unobserved and unrecognized. When the time had arrived to begin the service, Mr. Baxter asked anxiously where the navy was. The enquiry, "Where is the navy?" went round the room. "He is here, sir," replied Taylor. "I am the navy!" At that time Taylor was rather slim for a labouring man and looked about as unlike a popular preacher as could well be imagined. Hence the surprise of Mr. Baxter and his friends, who had very mixed ideas about this navy preacher, and wondered what would be the outcome of it all. But this state of mind did not last long, as with a ringing voice and a beaming face which told of the love of God in his heart, Taylor gave out the hymn:

"There is a name I love to hear,  
I love to speak its worth;  
It sounds like music in mine ear,  
The sweetest name on earth."



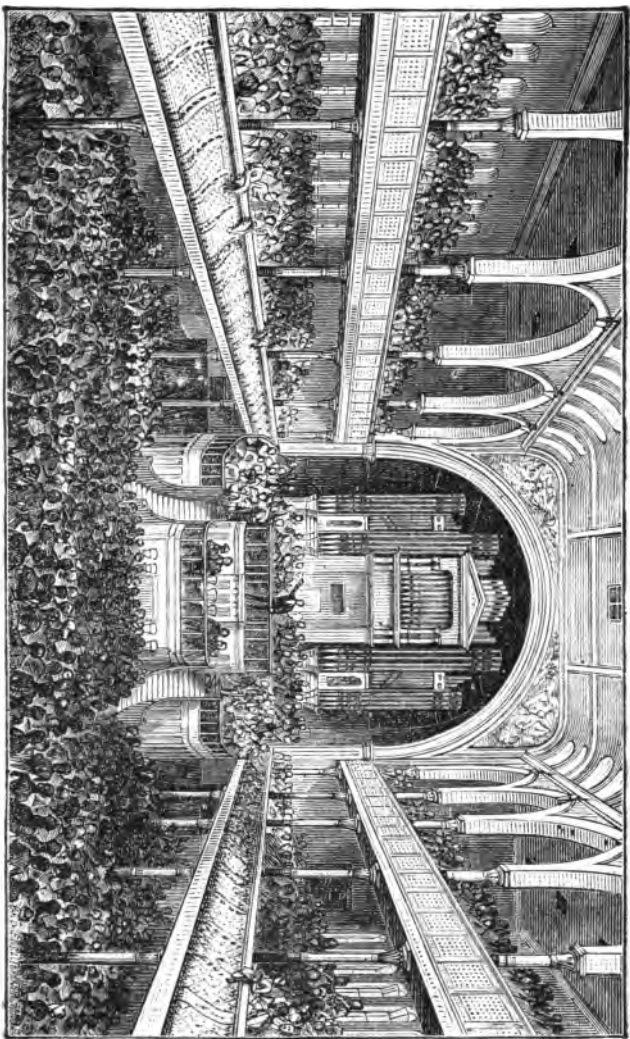
This beautiful hymn was sung with good effect by the congregation, after which the Scriptures were read. The navvy then began to speak, and it was quickly manifest that he was no ordinary speaker. He took for his text John xv, 12th verse, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you." Throwing his whole being into the subject, Taylor spoke with tremendous vigour and enthusiasm. He fairly swayed that great audience, and sustained their rapt attention for forty-five minutes. At the close of the service, Mr. R. Baxter seized both his hands, and shaking them vigorously, said, with a voice full of emotion, "Thank God, Taylor ! Thank God !" It was evident that the meeting was a great success, for everybody seemed moved. He was asked to take supper with some of the friends, but declined, saying in his homely style, "I'd rather have supper with my wife." However he was prevailed upon with some difficulty to go to supper the next Sunday night. After the meal was over Mr. Baxter said to him, "Taylor, did you know who sat next to you at the table ?" "No, sir," replied the navvy. "It was the Earl of Cavan," added Mr. Baxter. "Well sir," said the navvy very calmly, "he looked just like any other man." Taylor was perfectly natural at that supper-table,

as indeed he continued to be all his life. Whether in the company of lords or peasants, he was always the same cheerful, unassuming "Taylor, the Navy."

During the period embraced by the years 1864-67, most of the navy's preaching was carried on in London and its suburbs. Wherever earnest souls banded themselves together for the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, there Taylor was ever a welcome guest. Amongst many places in London, the following were favourite resorts of his in those early days: Bedford Hall; Burdett Hall; Mr. Mathieson's Hall; Agricultural Hall (where immense gatherings flocked to hear him); Kensal Chapel; Exeter Hall; Southall; Notting Dale School Rooms; Labourers' Church; Workmen's Club, Knightsbridge; Regent Music Hall; Ranelagh Hall; Mission Hall, Harrow Road; Greenwich Ragged School and Mission Church; Westbourne Hall, Paddington; Grafton Hall; The Potteries; King's Cross (Mr. Bennett's); Kettering; Lee Park; and George Yard, Whitechapel.

Joseph Samme, an old and respected friend of William Taylor's, was also preaching the Gospel with power at this time and is indeed still living. A little later on in his career Taylor was a familiar figure at the Edinburgh Castle (Dr.

Barnardo's) and at Mr. F. N. Charrington's Great Assembly Hall, Mile End Road. Concerning the good work carried on for God at the latter place night after night, a gentleman who had attended a Sunday evening service, remarked : "What a grand sight to look upon such a mass of people waiting patiently to hear the Gospel." This was said before the service commenced, and it was remarked later on whilst people had to turn away by hundreds, "It is a pity that you cannot accommodate a thousand or two more." For over two years the stewards had been compelled to refuse admittance to hundreds every Sunday, who would willingly have stood, even if a corner could have been found for them. Amongst the many gifted preachers who proclaimed the Gospel to this great mass of humanity, was Taylor, who ever took a foremost place. A leading worker writing to the press says : "Later on came William Taylor, known as the Navvy Evangelist. In this brother, Captain Smith has one of the finest working-men preachers of the day. We have marvelled as we have sat and listened to his discourses ; and then remembered what he was. He is a great favourite with our people, and not a few owe their present state of life to his visits from time to time. His fortnight's preaching was a great blessing, and he left us with the prayer of many for his future work."



GREAT ASSEMBLY HALL, MILE END ROAD, LONDON.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### A FLOWING TIDE OF SUCCESS.

**T**HE writer will never forget going with William Taylor to a meeting at the Great Assembly Hall in the month of October 1879. Seated on the great preaching platform with so many faces before one, and exposed to the concentrated gaze of thousands of pairs of eyes, was an experience never to be obliterated from the memory. But when, at the desire of the navy, that great audience broke out into a glorious hymn of praise, accompanied by the organ, it made one feel more in Heaven than on earth. The most hardened spirit could scarcely have failed to respond as those appealing strains rolled from that throng of voices :

“We’re travelling home to Heaven above,

“Will you go? Will you go?

“To sing the Saviour’s dying love,

“Will you go? Will you go?

“Millions have reached that blissful shore,

“Their trials and their labours o’er;

“And yet there’s room for millions more

“Will you go? Will you go?”

But glorious as was the singing, the navvy’s preaching seemed to eclipse it. When that short burly form, surmounted by the happy beaming face, rose to speak, a pleasant look of recognition seemed to pass playfully over the faces of the audience, giving the observer the impression that the speaker had “got” them. And indeed he had. The text was the last verse of Isaiah xxxv. “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” In graphic, but homely language, the speaker set forth the joys of the redeemed and their ultimate triumph in glory. He also pointed sinners to Jesus, who is the way to Zion, and told them how they too could obtain the joy which was the portion of those who loved the Lord. The people seemed to hang upon his words, for they perfectly understood the navvy. In the course of the address, metaphor and anecdote followed in quick succession, drawn mostly from the people’s own lives. It was indeed a time of

refreshing. Under date September 1892, Mr Kerwin the Secretary of the Tower Hamlets Mission, writes :—

“ William Taylor was much beloved by us all here and was one of our oldest friends, having preached for us for fifteen or sixteen years. *He never came to us without we had blessing.* The working people understood him, as they felt he was one of themselves. His addresses were most homely and yet with *great power.* May the record of such a good man's life be greatly blessed and owned of God.”

Besides the afore-mentioned missions, Taylor often preached at the Conference Hall, Mildmay Park; the St. Giles' Christian Mission; Down Hall, Wandsworth; Deptford Lecture Hall; and other well-known missions. During the years 1867-8 William Taylor's fame as a preacher caused calls for his services to come from all directions. Therefore we find him preaching further afield, not only at Hythe, but at Sandgate, Deal, Isle of Wight, Windsor, Sittingbourne, Winchester, Rye, Kettering, Greenwich, Aldershot, Oxford, Maidstone, Atherstone, and other towns. The navy's star was now in the ascendant. Large audiences were drawn wherever he went, whether in town or country; and the Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society received more applications for his services than it was possible to supply. It was during his visit to Oxford that Taylor met the critic who was going



to ask him so many knotty questions. He was on his way to preach one night when he was accosted by a man going in the same direction as himself. "I hear a *navvy* is going to preach at the —— Hall to-night." "Yes, friend," replied William, "I have heard the same, and am going. Where are you bound for?" "You see I'm a bit of a discussionist, and I'm going to ask this *navvy* a few knotty questions that he cannot answer. I'm going the same way as you." All this time the *navvy's* would-be critic had no idea who he was. But at length they arrived at the Hall which was filling rapidly. Taylor now suggested that his friend should take a front seat so that he might hear the *navvy* better, and then calmly mounted the platform, and conducted the service. At the close he told the audience that there was a friend present who had some questions to ask him, and would now be given the opportunity. It is needless to state that the friend was dumb with astonishment and had no queries to put that night. Taylor had a way of his own in managing infidels and others who "wanted to know too much," and these found very little success in disturbing his meetings, as his ready wit was always more than a match for their arguments. The *navvy* usually secured the goodwill and sympathy of

his audience by his homely style, and in such a manner that the people resented any interferences with his preaching.

In April 1872, Taylor was sent to Huntingdon, the result of which visit is best told by the following report which appeared in *THE CHRISTIAN* of April 18th, 1872.

"Mr. Willian Taylor of the Evangelization Society, has been here preaching the word of life and peace. Seldom have the masses been so entirely reached. Navvies, working men of all descriptions, drunkards, outcasts, and the most debased; all flocked alike to hear the working-man's proclamation of Gospel truth. The presence of the Lord, earnestly pleaded for at the noon-day meetings, which preceded each evening's address, was granted and realized. Many who came to scoff, remained to pray; many attracted by the simple fact that a working-man was to stand on the public platform and preach, were firstly, more seriously aroused by his earnestness; and secondly, deeply convicted of sin, eagerly enquiring of those who, at the close of each gathering, went in and out amongst them, to minister counsel and comfort, "Oh! what shall I do?" or "Do help me to come to Jesus." Seldom has Huntingdon been so shaken to its centre. Mr. Taylor's earnestness

and eloquence, while so effectually stirring up the hearts of the working-class, were not lost upon the higher classes. Many were present each night, and all who were the Lord's people were encouraged and stimulated to a more earnest seeking after souls; those previously half-persuaded to become Christians, were aroused to deeper thought and a more anxious desire to know something of the joy, and consolation, and peace, of the religion which to the preacher was such an evident reality. The Institution Hall, where the meetings were held, was on each occasion crowded to the uttermost. It was a grand sight to witness the blending of all sects and denominations, met together as one body, to hear and receive the Gospel of Christ. We feel a special blessing has been outpoured upon the meetings, and we believe fully that it has been the result of united prayer and effort on the part of all the churches, who were one in their desire to win souls for Christ and strengthen the faith of the weak. Oh! that such unity might extend this love to Christ, displayed in love to the brotherhood! During this mission a large number of persons made profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus. On the Thursday afternoon, Mr. Taylor, by the invitation of the chaplain, Rev. W. Burke, spoke to the people at the

Workhouse, where his touching address greatly impressed both old and young." It was at the close of one of these meetings at Huntingdon that a little lad named Jimmy, 13 years of age, came up to Taylor, and said: "Please, sir, am I too young to be spoken to about Jesus?" and burst into tears. The navy knelt down with the lad there and then and prayed until the lad found peace in Jesus. Some years after when Taylor came that way again, he found that the boy had been used of God to the conversion of nearly all the other members of his family, who afterwards joined different churches in the district.

It was about this time that the navy met Mr. Moody, the American evangelist, at Mr. Varley's Tabernacle, Notting Hill, where the latter was preaching at the time. Mr. Moody asked Taylor to go back with him to America, adding that "there was plenty of work in that country for such as he to do." But the navy believed that there was first of all plenty for him to do in his *own* country, and declined the kind invitation.

The year 1873 though commenced with a spell of ill-health, was a very blessed one for the navy evangelist. He was endowed with a fairly strong and robust constitution; yet the tremendous exertions he put forth

in the service of God, caused him to be laid aside by sickness now and again. On January 1st he went to Nottingham, though feeling very unwell, but managed to preach there six times. On the ninth of the same month he was obliged to seek medical advice, by which he gained a little relief, and was enabled to proceed to Atherstone, where he preached again. He also once more visited Huntingdon, Abingdon, Wantage, Henley-on-Thames, Carlisle, Doncaster, Southampton, and Marlborough. During one of his missions at Southampton, Taylor was invited by some Christian workers to assist in an open-air meeting on a large space of land where a fair and sports were in progress. The idea was a good one, but the practical working of it was quite another matter. When the party arrived at the selected spot, they found themselves surrounded by the usual motley frequenters of a fair. These included show-men, betting-men, and others connected with the "horsey" fraternity, together with a fair sprinkling of genuine roughs, who at once began their usual horse play. All these considered it a capital joke that this band of preachers should try to hold a service *there* above all places, and moreover they determined to have some fun at the speakers' expense. The situation soon

became really alarming. The preachers were up in a waggon and fully expected to be the mark for all kinds of missiles. After trying in vain to get a hearing from this turbulent mob the workers began to disappear from the scene one after the other. The navy however, who was not so easily alarmed, saw there was yet a chance to turn the fortune of the war into His Master's favour. Lifting his heart to the Lord in prayer, he stood up among the heaving, yelling mass of humanity, looked into those faces, so scarred with marks of sin, and began to relate the experiences of his career as a navy. They became much quieter, for many now wanted to listen, and bade their noisier companions stop their noise, and give the man a hearing. In another minute or two, the experienced evangelist, in his own inimitable style, had them in his grasp. With staring eyes and open mouths that hitherto howling mob was listening with rapt attention. Very soon Taylor was telling them of the love of God in sending Jesus to die for the sins of a lost and guilty world. He told them how the Father was waiting to receive the returning prodigal: that the door of grace was still open, and they might enter and be saved while yet there was time. He told them of the Gospel feast where all might come and

taste of a Saviour's love and eternal joys, "without money and without price." Who can tell how many souls the Holy Spirit claimed there that day? However that be, it was strongly evident from the anxious faces and respectful demeanour of the assembly as it broke up, that God's message had not been delivered in vain. When the navvy had finished his preaching, and had time to look around, he found he was left alone in the waggon, having been deserted by his more timid colleagues.





## CHAPTER IX.

### EVENTFUL PREACHING TOURS.

ON July 14th, 1873, Taylor proceeded to Ireland, that being the only visit he ever paid to that country. For five weeks he conducted successful meetings in various parts of the island, chiefly at Dublin, Armagh, Belfast, Greenore, Portadown, Downpatrick, Dundalk, Fermanagh, Colislánd, and Dungannon. Many souls were blessed under his faithful delivery of the Gospel message, and he returned to England much encouraged. He proceeded in September to Pewsey, where it pleased the Lord to grant showers of blessing by means of services held in a barn, where, despite very wet weather, the country people flocked in great numbers.

A well-known Christian lady who was present wrote thus. about these meetings: "Yesterday afternoon the barn at Pewsey was filled, notwithstanding the rain, and in the evening the attendance was better than we could have expected, especially as the rain came down in torrents.



Taylor's address in the afternoon was very, very good, and every one was delighted with it. But I hardly know how to convey to you any idea of what the evening address was like. Taylor is always wonderfully good, but last night he was extraordinarily so. He took for his subject, 'The Cross of Christ,' and I never heard the Gospel more beautifully put. The full atonement made for the sinner, the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus, and the way the ungodly are justified and accepted were set forth in a remarkably clear and simple manner. Taylor has such a beautiful way of speaking of the love of Jesus, and as he speaks of it his face beams with such a holy joy, and every word seems so real. The people were rivetted in attention and almost seemed to eat the words that fell from his lips. It seems so wonderful that an uneducated man should have such a marvellous gift for speaking. It pleased the Lord to set his seal upon many souls through the humble navvy's preaching at these barn meetings at Pewsey."

In the autumn of that year the navvy journeyed to the East of England and preached at Wisbeach, Southwold, Lowestoft, Yarmouth, Beccles, Scarborough, and other towns. At Lowestoft he preached in the Public Hall on September 12th to an audience numbering fully 600 persons,

many of whom were connected with seafaring life. He preached there again on October 17th, to another large audience. It was during his visit to this town that he met a certain clergyman who evidently knew little about Taylor or the Evangelization Society. This gentleman came to the navy before the service, and said, "I hope you have not come here to preach nonsense?" Most men would have been taken somewhat aback, but Taylor replied, "Oh, no! my Society does not send men out to preach nonsense, or its funds would soon suffer, for the public will not support a Society whose men preach nonsense. I have come here to preach Christ." At this seaport, Taylor met Mr. Johnson, so well-known and beloved for his noble efforts among the fishermen. For over 30 years this Christian veteran has stood to his post of duty, rescuing the perishing, caring for the dying, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and preaching the Gospel to the poor and benighted. Shipwrecked seamen and others in distress have never been turned away from the Seamen's Bethel, supported chiefly through the efforts of himself and a few devoted Christians. He has also a fine band of workers, nearly all of whom are toilers on the deep. Taylor, the navy, spent a happy time with these rough but hearty fellows.

On November 12th, 1873, Taylor journeyed from Westbury to Rugby to hold meetings at the latter place. Large gatherings assembled in the Town Hall to hear him preach. Concerning these meetings the late Dr. Dixon wrote to Captain Smith, as follows :

“ St. Matthew's, Rugby.

*November 15th, 1873.*

William Taylor has been among us, and right well has he fulfilled his part. He was somewhat tired after his ten hours' journey from Westbury, but it was not very apparent in his address, and last night he was admirable. I cannot but express my astonishment at his power of utterance, his clear views of the truths of salvation, and his loving manner in pressing these truths upon his hearers. He is, in fact, just the man for the work. We had large attendances, last night being the largest. Good must follow such faithful addresses. I had some conversations with him privately, and much I like him. He is modest and unassuming, willing to be taught, and not puffed up by his marvellous gifts. He speaks very affectionately of you, and says he owes much to you. From all that I have hitherto heard, I gather that he has made an excellent impression.

Yours faithfully,”

R. DIXON.

In the same month Taylor went to Dorchester where he had some grand meetings. The last two nights, the Corn Exchange and the Old Exchange outside, were filled with about one thousand people gathered from every denomination

and every class, from Colonel and Mrs. Bingham—(the lady who did so much for the Dorset Militia)—to the lowest men and women in Mill Street (the Dorchester St. Giles.) The people came from Cerne, eight miles east, as well as from every other surrounding village. The late Rev. E. W. Pears in a letter to the Evangelization Society says, "Taylor has left behind him an impression that will not soon be effaced. What I have been particularly struck with in the working-men preachers has been the simplicity of their character. I don't like to make a difference when all were good and useful, but there is a charm about Taylor which is irresistible, and a power of thought and feeling, and expression, seldom equalled. To see, as I saw, on Monday night, a crowded meeting at once in tears, which could not be concealed, and on Tuesday night, one thousand people, at his request, in silent prayer, when a faint whisper might have been heard, is not an ordinary spectacle; and when the grace of God hallows such power, we should be unfaithful if we did not expect blessed fruit. For myself, I must again thank you for your kindness in sending us such a help and shall ever remember your most important Society in my prayers."

In 1874 in consequence of Taylor being still unwell and

complaining of pains in his chest, he was sent to Dr. Kidd for examination, who reported to Captain Smith on August 21st, as follows : "I have seen William Taylor this afternoon and I am afraid there is consumption on his left lung ;" but I would like to examine him again in a week if he will come. Meantime it would be well for him to discontinue preaching for a while."

By God's blessing, however the physician's fears were not realized, for Taylor got better and continued preaching. But ten years later his lungs showed signs of weakness once again, and indeed preparations were made for him to remove to Australia, in hopes that the mild, warm air of that country would benefit him, circumstances arose which prevented his going.

In the year 1874, Taylor conducted missions at Earlswood, Runcorn, Wantage, Swindon, Banbury, Huntingdon, and other towns. In Christmas week he held a Mission at Westbury, and, though this was the worst week in the year to secure a good attendance, he had from 250 to 280 persons each night. Miss Shorland in a letter to the Society, wrote : "Taylor was very earnest, and the last night I do not think I ever heard an address more likely to fasten itself on the minds of all who heard it. The

Subject was, ‘ *The greatest sight the world ever saw.*’ After the meeting the people lingered as though unwilling to leave. I feel sure those who are tempted to enter into scenes of sin and frivolity this Christmas must have Taylor’s solemn warning ringing in their ears.”

In February, 1875, the navy journeyed to Selby, in Yorkshire, and there conducted a remarkable mission, during which scores of souls were won to Christ. The attendance continued to increase each night till at last there were 600 people crowded into a room built to contain only 400. A friend wrote: “The meetings were exceedingly solemn and impressive, and the people paid most breathless attention to the addresses, which were beautiful, striking, and original, from beginning to end ; full of Gospel truth and delivered with unusual power. There was a complete absence of noisy excitement ; yet numbers were deeply affected, and in many cases we could watch the sharp spiritual struggle going on night after night. Satan trying to retain his captives until One, stronger than he, rescued them from his grasp. Two young girls accepted Christ one evening, and the next night their mother was earnestly pleaded with, and soon after, also put her trust in the Saviour. When she had found peace, she exclaimed,

‘There has been a wall of sin between me and my God, oh so high ; but it is gone now, for Jesus has taken it away.’ A young man who came to Jesus on the Sunday, said : ‘This is my nineteenth birthday but I am only just beginning to live.’ Altogether nearly one hundred souls were gathered in during this mission.”

Concerning some meetings that Taylor held at Wanstead in March 1875, Captain Chapman wrote to the Honorary Secretary :

London, *March 19th, 1875.*

Dear Friend,

We have prayed that our school-room at Wanstead might be filled during this week, and the Lord has answered our prayer. I never saw a room so full, and many could not get in. We have prayed that those who came might meet with God, and get a blessing, which prayer we have faith to believe will be, and has been also answered. Doubtless the temptation to many is to go and hear William Taylor, and I am not surprised at it. You know him to be an earnest and spiritually-minded man, and I believe so too, but I also know the man is a born orator. “*Poeta nascitur non fit*,” such native eloquence I have hardly ever heard before. Probably such a gift is a temptation to his hearers and to himself. May the Lord keep him humble, and use him increasingly in the work for which He hath fitted him. Our rector is beaming with thankfulness, and his curate, who was with me last night, is of the same mind. I have all along considered that your working-men evangelists are especially raised up of God at this time, and I am more than ever confirmed in my opinion. No artist’s pencil could have conveyed so vivid and life-like a picture of the Vale of Rephidim, as did

Taylor last night. It was simply thrilling. I find wherever I go an open door as a rule, and sometimes crowded halls. To Him be all the praise !

Yours affectionately,  
W. D. CHAPMAN.

*P.S.*—I know no man so fit to carry on Moody's work as Taylor. It may be well to bear this in mind, and the Lord will direct.

In December 1875, Taylor went to Tunbridge Wells, and though it was Christmas week, yet each night the hall which comfortably held 500 people, was crowded with between six and seven hundred. There were here also many cases of conversion to God. One Sunday night Taylor spoke in the great hall to 800 men, with much power and blessing. It was at the close of one his missions at Tunbridge Wells that crowds lined the streets to bid the navy "farewell." The late Duchess of Kent, who happened to be driving that way, stopped her carriage, shook hands with, and spoke kindly to, Taylor ; giving him also a present for his wife.







## CHAPTER X.

### SOME FRUITS OF HIS WORK.

**W**E have now arrived at the remarkable series of services held by William Taylor at Burton-on-Trent, from January 3rd to 23rd, 1876. The meetings took place in St. George's Hall. A large number of Christian friends of all denominations had united heartily; both in prayer and visitation, to make the Mission successful. And indeed it was, by the blessing of God, made the means of an incalculable amount of good. The people flocked to the Hall in crowds, and every night the place was filled to its utmost extent, every inch of standing room in the aisles, lobbies, etc., being occupied. The enquiry room was well filled each night and scores of people gave their hearts to God. A mid-day prayer meeting was held, fifteen minutes of which were spent in hearing from various friends, particulars of remarkable conversions, which had come under their notice. One

notable case was that of a man who had been under deep concern for some days. Feeling he could bear this no longer, he fell on his knees in the brewhouse, surrounded by his fellow-workmen, and obtained peace there and then. Another case was that of a young lady, assistant in one of the shops, who burst into tears whilst standing behind the counter, and was spoken to by a friend who pointed her to Jesus. On the evening when the Mission concluded, such a congregation crowded St. George's Hall as had probably never been seen there before. On previous nights the audiences had averaged 1,500, but it was impossible to find room for the crowds that came on this last night, and the friends were compelled to hold an overflow meeting attended by several hundreds in an adjoining chapel. In the Great Hall it was a hallowed season of refreshing from the presence of God. The navy preached with much power from 1 Peter ii. 6, "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." The report of the Sub-Committee relative to these meetings, said :

"The Sub-Committee appointed at the general meeting held on October 13th, 1875, now beg to report that the series of special religious services which have been conducted

in St. George's Hall, Burton-on-Trent, by William Taylor, of the Evangelization Society, during the first three weeks of the present year, have been most successful in every respect. Previous to the commencement of the services the town was divided into districts, and a system of house-to-house visitation arranged, and 20,000 handbills have been distributed in this manner. During the first week the attendance was good, but from the commencement of the second week the Hall was crowded to overflowing each night, and we have reason to believe that on several occasions large numbers have been unable to gain admission. The enquiry room has been occupied after every service, and about 150 names have been obtained of persons who profess to have passed from darkness into light, some of whom were of the most profligate character. This, however, does not by any means represent the amount of good effected, as considerable numbers who admitted their deep spiritual concern, have been spoken to and advised with, in the body of the Hall.

Many interesting cases have come under notice in which enquirers have been blessed whilst engaged in their daily employment. A foreman in one of the large establishments in the town publicly stated at one of the meetings, that no less than sixteen of the men who work in the department

in which he is engaged, professed to have been converted at these services. Special Services for children have been held on Saturday afternoons, and on the two last occasions from 1,300 to 1,400 young people were present at each gathering. Mid-day prayer meetings have been held daily, the average attendance being from 80 to 100. All the ministers of the town (with one or two exceptions) have entered heartily into the movement, sectarianism has been entirely forgotten, and ministers and people have cordially and harmoniously worked together, and have been much encouraged by the successful results. The whole of the known converts are being visited and asked what church they intend to join. When this is completed a list of names and addresses will be supplied to each minister. The Sub-Committee decided that a collection should be made on the last day of the services, as a thank-offering to the Evangelization Society, the amount realized being £34, which has been remitted to the Society and duly acknowledged by the Secretary.

In concluding this report the Sub-Committee take this opportunity of stating that the services of the evangelist, Mr. William Taylor, have been most acceptable to all classes. Large numbers of people have been attracted to the Hall who have not been in the habit of

attending either church or chapel, and the amount of good done is incalculable.

(Signed) { JOHN GREGORY, } *Hon. Secs."*  
              { JOHN WOOD, }

Thus the word was with signs following, and precious souls entered into the Kingdom amid the rejoicing of men and angels. It may be of interest to our readers to know that the evangelist's last text at Burton was the one he preached from on the Sunday immediately prior to his death.

In April 1876 Taylor conducted a mission at Ashbourne, which proved fruitful in the conversion, amongst others, of some very bad characters. A friend who was present thus testifies concerning this mission: "Our hearts are indeed cheered by seeing what wonders God hath wrought in our midst. Calvary and the dear One who suffered there as our Substitute, have been the centre of all the teaching this week. We thank and praise God who by his Spirit's power has led many weary souls to rest in Jesus. We never felt the Lord working here so much as now. One woman was among the first fruits who shewed her misery plainly upon her poor, pale, and worn face. Her wicked husband had been in the habit of kicking and brutally

treating her. Now he is a blood-washed, though feeble, believer. Sunday has formerly been used by him as a day for trading about horses, etc; but last Sabbath he had a letter telling him to come and fetch a donkey, but he said that never more must that be done on the Lord's day, and on Monday the donkey was bought. Another interesting case was a Romanist, who, with his wife, found rest in Jesus. Again, a young gentleman who attended a Ritualistic church in Lancashire, came to spend Easter with friends, and was led to trust Christ at one of the meetings. A gipsy, formerly a great fighter, and his wife, were also trophies of grace, and many other cases could be mentioned. When we contrast the state of Ashbourne now to what it was thirteen months ago, we can but wonder, and adore our Lord and Master."

This independent testimony, so valuable in itself, is borne out by a letter written by Taylor from Ashbourne, under date April 15th, 1876. He says, "I have come across a little incident to-night that may be interesting. A big, rough-looking man came over to Mayfield (near Ashbourne), a two miles' walk, with a few more people, after a hard day's work. In coming home he told us that he was brought up a Catholic, but for thirty years he had

never been to a place of worship, save to christenings and marriage services, until this week. He brought his brother-in-law with him to hear the Gospel, and said it was time he was saved, for he had been a brute to his wife, and had nearly starved and beaten her to death at different times. He had, he said, broke the bellows over her head, and at another time, broke a paraffin lamp and all the furniture in the house. But now he could only praise the Lord. He and his wife had, he said, started on the way to heaven, and he did pray God to save his brother-in-law that night. Another man and his wife came and told me that they could praise the Lord that they were saved, and they also told me of the wretched way in which they had lived. The wife said she had stood to be kicked by him until he was tired of kicking ; and she had seen him smash everything, practically, in the house, and throw the tea-kettle across the room, and the teapot after it. They said also that if someone had asked them a week previously to come over to Mayfield from Ashbourne, on a Saturday night to hear the Gospel, they would have asked them if they considered them fools to go to such a place as that. But now, they told me, it was the best Saturday night they had ever spent. I trust the Lord will keep them faithful to Himself."

We have given the navy's letter almost word for word, in his own style. He finished his Ashbourne meetings with a united tea to which three hundred sat down. But in after years he often preached there, and was always welcome. About this time he had a remarkable meeting in the East of London. The name of the Hall cannot be quoted with certainty, but there was a large audience. He took for his text, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." It was a favourite address with him, and it pleased the Lord to pour out His Holy Spirit in such a manner that night that almost the whole assembly were in tears, and many of the people were pleading for mercy. It was impossible for Taylor to finish his address, for crowds rushed to the enquiry room. One who was present at that meeting testifies that she never witnessed such a scene before or since.

In April 1877 the writer was present at some marvellous meetings which Taylor held at the Public Hall, Croydon.

At this mission the work grew in such a manner that Charles Carter (now in Australia) was sent to help the navy. There was a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The ante-rooms were crowded after every service, many of the anxious being amongst the roughest characters in the town. The refined lady and gentleman, the



working-man, and the tramp, could be seen seeking Christ together in the same room, and scores found rest in Jesus. Friends from London heard somehow of the good work at Croydon, and came down by train night after night, adding their earnest prayers and experiences to those of the already large body of workers. Oh that the Lord would grant again such a spirit of revival throughout our towns and villages. Taylor's address about Noah's Ark, on April 5th, was powerful and far-reaching. In after years a gentleman met him in another part of England, and said that that address had led him to trust Christ. "It was when you were talking about the door being shut," said he, "that the blessing came. You said that only the thickness of a plank made all the difference between those who were *quite saved* and those that were *quite lost*. How I feared lest my sins should be the plank that shut me out of heaven! So I came to Christ, the Ark that God has appointed for the guilty sinner, and was saved."

In March 1878, the evangelist had a blessed series of services at Atherstone, where he had been on previous occasions. Taylor was always popular and welcome at this place, and therefore it was not surprising that people crowded in hundreds to hear him preach.



## CHAPTER XI.

### HIS POWER OVER THE WORKING CLASSES.

**I**N April of this same year he had an interesting Mission in connection with Holy Trinity Church, Blackburn, assisted by his son, William John, who had just then returned from a six years' stay in America. He was converted principally through the instrumentality of Mr. Henry Lakin, of Stapenhill, a very old friend of the navy, and a well-known preacher. Concerning this Mission at Blackburn, a clergyman wrote: "We have had crowded audiences, and deep attention and solemnity have characterized all who were present. Many have attended who have not been in the habit of going to God's house, and Taylor's clear enunciation of Gospel truth, expressed with much power and earnestness, has not failed to make a deep impression, for Christ crucified has been truly set forth. I should not have been surprised if, while we had so many

extra services, our regular congregations had been diminished but the contrary has been the case, for never during the time I have been here, have we had such large congregations on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, as this year."

In May the navvy proceeded to Rishton, a suburb of Blackburn, and in this town, which was then well-known through rather serious strikes and riots among the working-classes, it had been arranged that William Taylor should hold a series of meetings. Amidst all the excitement of that time it seemed as if it must be impossible to gather people together to listen to the things of God. In one of his letters he describes one of the scenes he witnessed in the streets. Several of the men, he remarked, had such an expression on their faces that they made him shudder, and he could only utter the hope that he would never see anything similar again. While the meetings were proceeding the smashing of hundreds of panes of glass could be distinctly heard. Those who came to the first meeting were hungry, anxious, and suffering, and it was the opinion of many that it would be best to surrender the plan of having a series of meetings at that particular time. Yet of those who first came to hear Taylor there were some who found in the Gospel he preached, the rest which they

had sought in vain elsewhere. As the days went by, many came from the scenes of distress and disquietude to hear the Calvary tidings, which could bring peace to every heart, and at the end of the series Rev. T. G. Horwood was able to write : " Never have the meetings been so well attended before. Not less, I should think, than an average of five hundred, have flocked to hear the Master's message. Four or five times out of the fifteen, as many as 750 must have sat, crowded in our school-room. I knew not that the strangers who assembled, even dwelt in the village, and friends who have lived in the parish nearly all their lives were equally surprised. It was indeed a clearing-out of back-streets, of souls who never attended a place of worship. Not merely the fact that a navvy was going to preach to them of God's redemption brought them, for they continued coming long after curiosity had been satisfied ; but power accompanied the Word, and there was a real stirring among the dry bones."

In June, Taylor went to Swindon, where a suitable hall, the Mechanic's Institute, was engaged. The meetings were well-advertised ; and after many prayers had been offered on behalf of the Mission, William Taylor gave the first addresses on the first Sunday in June, and continued preaching every evening throughout the week ; and twice

on the following Sunday. At the first meeting two hundred people assembled, brought together, to all appearance, chiefly through curiosity, wondering what one, who had been a navvy, could say about the tidings of salvation. But the clear and unmistakable way in which the evangelist told the story of the Cross, made such a marked impression on those who heard it, that on each succeeding night increasing numbers flocked to hear him. When Sunday came round again, the Hall was crowded to excess, 900, at least, being present, though it was only calculated to hold 750; and several persons being unable to obtain admittance. It was said that a like gathering had never been known in Swindon before. In September, 1878, the navvy was at the Retainer's Hall, Rye House, where some remarkable meetings took place, the audiences continuing to increase night after night, till fully 1,400 were crowded into the Hall. This is the more remarkable when it is remembered that the building was in a lonely district, most of the people reaching it by train. Captain Chapman and Mr. Barclay took part in the services, also many of the neighbouring clergy. It was a time of much blessing, and cause for thankfulness to God.

The following is taken from *The Record* of October 9th, 1878 :

“The Rev. P. S. O’Brien, of Christ Church, Somerstown, who was the first cause, under God, of these meetings being held, and who came down twice from London, specially to attend the meetings, writes as follows: ‘Last night’s meeting was, I feel sure, accompanied with much blessing. My heart was filled with joy and thanksgiving. Truly our God has been showing forth His power in a marvellous way. Have we not abundant proof that the ‘Old, Old Story,’ has lost none of its attractive force? With such meetings as these, we may rest satisfied that the people of our land will gladly come and listen to any man who can faithfully explain to them the plan of salvation. The serious concern is to keep the work going. Souls have been aroused, and impressions have been made; what next? Now will come the time for building up, strengthening, and confirming. I do hope that the neighbouring clergy are alive to this responsibility. Our people at Christ Church, Somerstown, have felt a deep interest in these gatherings, and last Sunday I mentioned the subject from the pulpit in the evening, and secured the prayerful sympathy of my whole flock.’”

Mr. Taylor’s work at Glasgow in November, 1878, is thus mentioned in *The Christian Week* of November 13th :

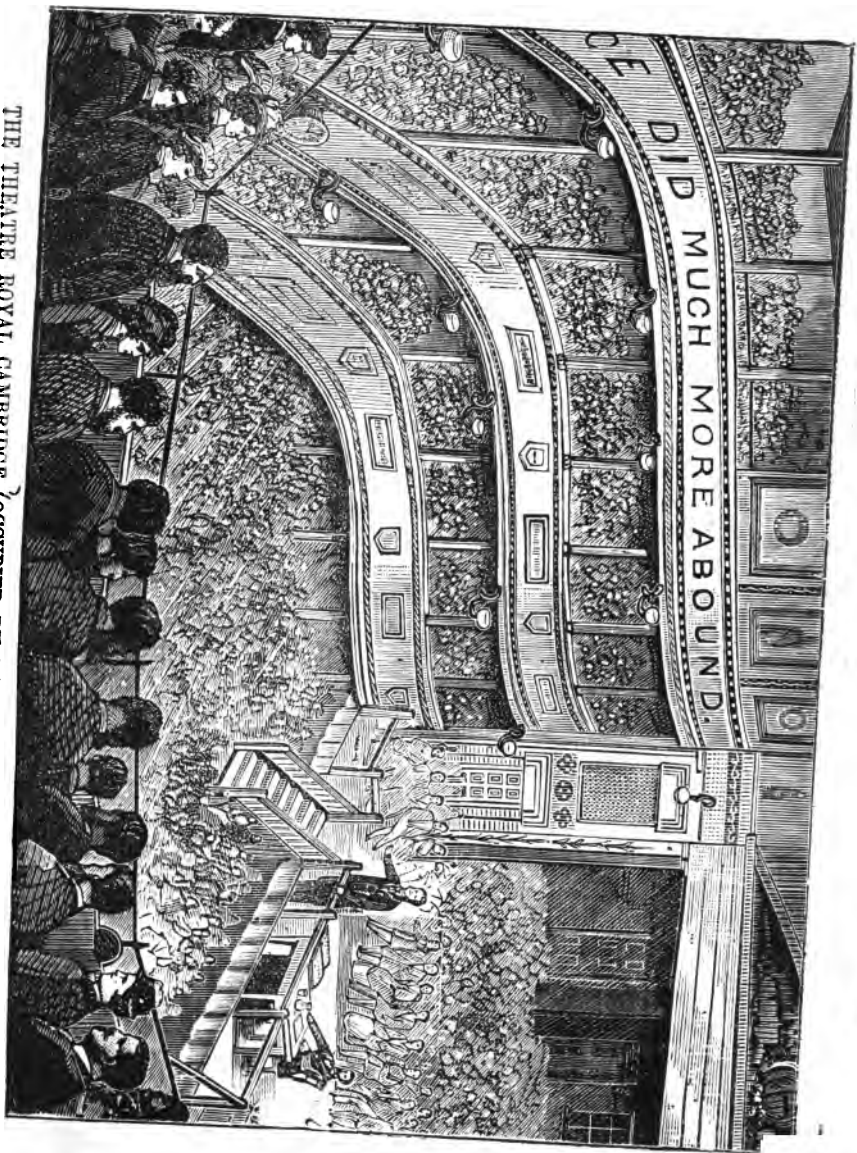
## WORK IN THE EAST-END OF GLASGOW.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.

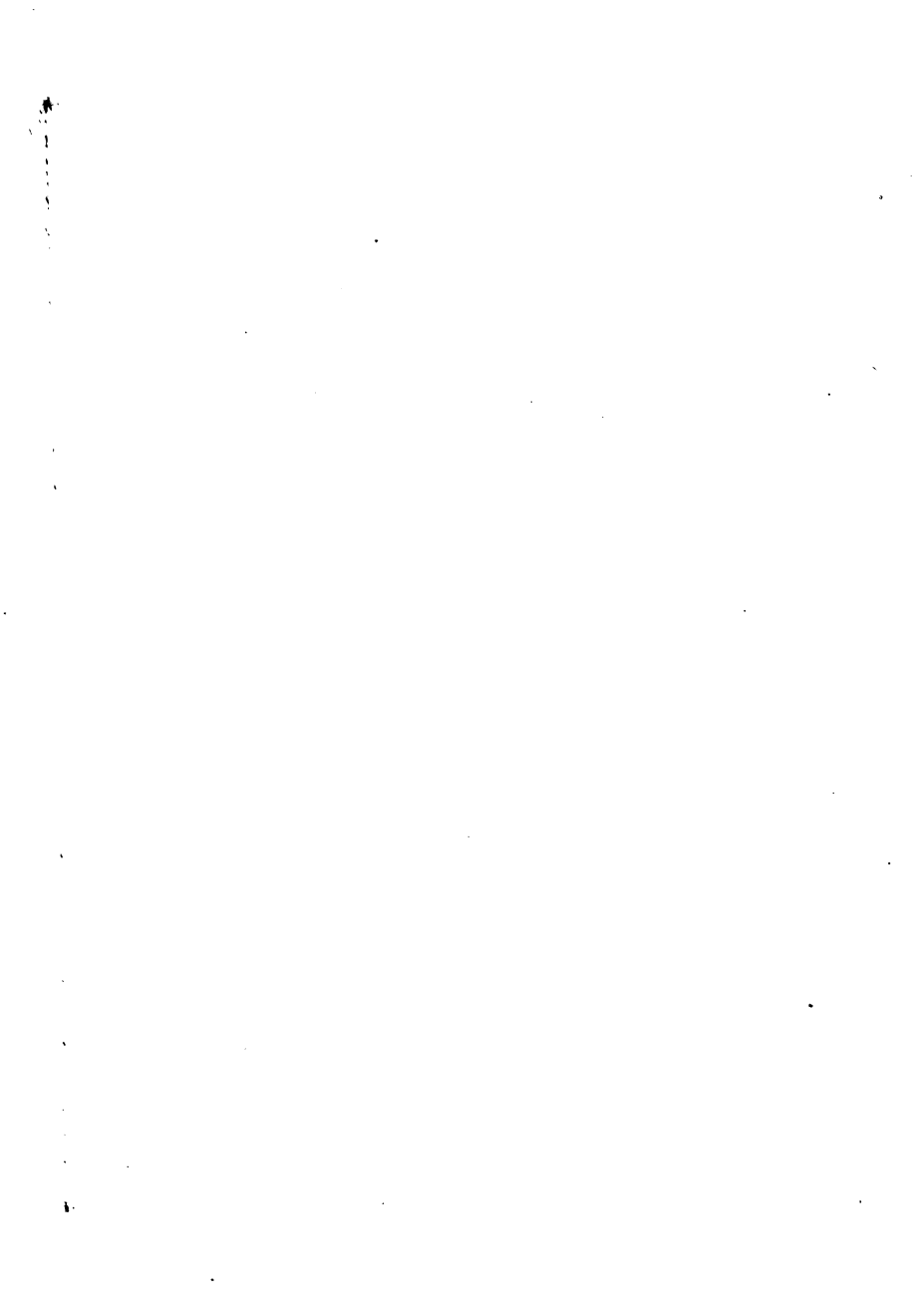
"Set a working-man to catch working-people," has proved the right method in the case of three weeks' services just concluded in the Bethany Hall, the East-end branch of the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association. William Taylor, of the Evangelization Society, was the preacher, and he commenced his Mission on the 20th ult., when, after a considerable amount of ingenuity had been expended in packing the hall, hundreds were turned away. The audience, composed entirely of the working-class, listened with great attention, and it was apparent to all the workers that a time of blessing had set in. They have not been disappointed, for the interest deepened as the services went on. One pleasing feature was the large attendance of men whose faces showed plainly that they were not only understanding the preacher's message, but laying it to heart. Some cheering cases of impression and apparent decision for Christ, were witnessed; much good seed has also been sown which will yet bear a golden harvest."

In December, 1878, Taylor held meetings in a hall at Thornton Heath, near Croydon. At this place, most determined and active opposition to the Gospel was manifested. For once in his career the navy was baffled. A band of "lewd fellows of the baser sort," got possession of the hall, and made preaching impossible. Once only in the navy's diary we find this entry, under Tuesday, December 31st, "Could not speak for a noise with boys," (really young men.) But Divine Wisdom had ordained

THE THEATRE ROYAL CAMBRIDGE (OCCUPIED BY BARNWELL MISSION)







that these sinners should be plucked from the Devil's hands, for in a subsequent mission, two years later, (1880) Taylor had the joy of seeing many of this rowdy band soundly converted to God. Two at least of their number are now acceptable evangelists and soul-winners for the Master. General Graydon, of Upper Norwood, was deeply interested in the work at Thornton Heath, and presided at many of the meetings conducted by the navy. In letters to the Evangelization Society the General bore abundant and most encouraging personal testimony to the good work carried on at the Public Hall, and People's Hall in that place.

On Sunday evening, August, 14, 1892, Taylor's son Noah, conducted a service at the People's Hall. At the close the organist asked if he was the son of the navy, who preached there many years before. On receiving an affirmative answer, the gentleman said, "I am one of Taylor's spiritual children, as I was converted through him 12 years ago." It naturally gave the navy's son no small delight thus to meet with some fruit of his father's labour in years gone by.

On Sunday, January 5th, 1879, the navy commenced a memorable Mission at the Theatre Royal, Cambridge. It was continued till the 22nd of January and was accompanied with much blessing and daily-increasing

attendances. William Taylor had many fruitful seasons of labour in this place during his evangelistic career. The good work at this Theatre has been carried on as the Barnwell Mission for upwards of 13 years with many signs of the Divine blessing. Mr. W. K. Vawser, the Honorary Superintendent and Treasurer, and Mr. E. Hardwicke, were considered by the evangelist to be amongst his oldest and best friends. He always spoke of them in his home circle in the highest terms and looked forward to his visits to Cambridge with the most pleasurable anticipation.

In March 1879, the navy evangelist conducted services at Winchester. An extract from a letter by a gentleman who was present at all the meetings, is worthy of record, as it gives further insight into the character of the evangelist. He wrote : "The more I see and hear of, and from, Mr. Taylor, the more I like and esteem him as an evangelist. He seems to me to be bright and cheerful, and at the same time humble ; and though he has a vein of humour, I particularly remarked he never descended to anything like levity. The more I heard him the more I liked him, and think him most uncompromising and faithful. He did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God." As the writer of this note was a retired naval commander, we

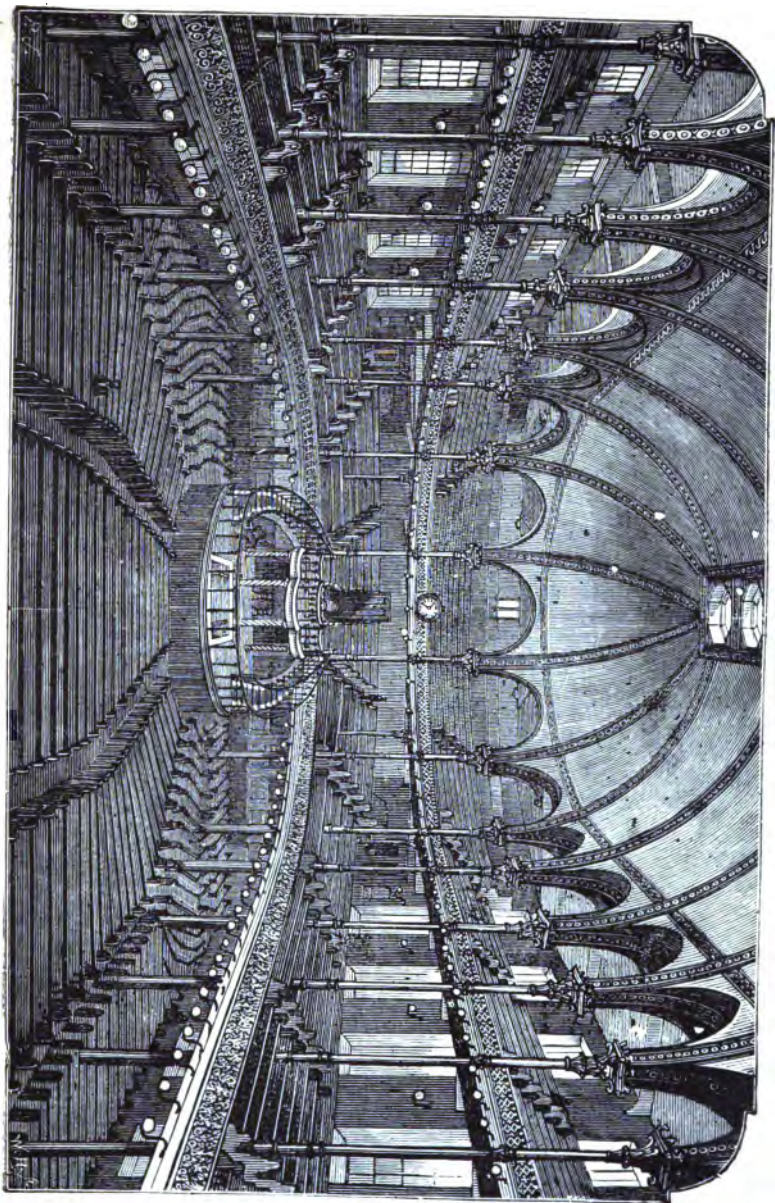
may accept this opinion as a faithful index of one side of the navy's character.

The Rev. H. Webb Smith wrote thus to the Honorary Secretary, concerning a Mission held by Mr. Taylor at High Wycombe, in 1879: "As one of the ministers of Wycombe, I think it only right to inform you of the success with which God has crowned the labours of our friend, Mr. Taylor, here. Having attended all the evening meetings save one, I am in a position to speak positively as to what has been accomplished. The hall has always been well filled and upon several occasions crowded; while yesterday, both in the afternoon and evening, ante-rooms, passages, platform, etc, were all thronged. In the evening, indeed, a large number of disappointed persons were turned away, not being able even to hear; and I can speak with unfeigned thankfulness and joy of the attention which has been displayed. One could but feel that the Holy Spirit was applying the Word at every meeting. The naturalness and earnestness of our friend rendered him very useful; and although he has always spoken, alike in public and private, as one bearing the burden of the Lord, yet his Christian cheerfulness has, I know, helped to commend his Master to those who are out of the way. I was also much impressed with the way in

which Taylor entered into the spirit of your Society, calling sinners to Christ, and, with an absence of denominationalism, telling them when saved to associate themselves with the Lord's people."

On Thursday, October 14, 1879, we find the navvy back in London at the Butcher's Festival at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. On that occasion the great building was full of London butchers and their friends. Addresses were delivered by the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Mr. Henry Varley, and the Navvy Evangelist. A newspaper report of the meeting stated concerning the latter, "The next speaker was Mr. Taylor, for many years a navvy, but now a preacher of the Evangelization Society. Mr. Taylor thrilled his vast audience by his native eloquence, and by the experimental way in which he presented the Christian life. He gave his own experience of its supporting-power amid circumstances of difficulty and opposition; and recited with much effect the testimony of a friend who after fifty years trial of it, could sing, on a dying bed, 'All is well.'" But very few in that vast congregation (the preacher's wife excepted) ever knew that in the midst of his impassioned utterance, the navvy's nose commenced to bleed most freely, and he was wiping it with his large red handkerchief. Three months previously he had nearly

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.





bled to death through the bursting of a blood-vessel at the top of the nose. But it was like him to persevere to the end, while dear Mr. Spurgeon behind him, with tears running down his face, was saying in a low tone, "Praise the Lord! Keep at it, Taylor! Give it to them, Taylor!" Mr. Taylor never forgot this novel experience at the Tabernacle, and often spoke about it in his home.

In November, 1879, he went to Glasgow and conducted another mission at which it pleased the Lord to grant him much blessing. About this good work, the Rev. George Stewart wrote as follows: "I take the earliest opportunity of thanking you for favouring us during the last fortnight, with the services of your highly esteemed evangelist, William Taylor. Having myself presided over the nightly meetings, I have had ample opportunity for noticing the way in which the congregations appear to receive his addresses, and I can say, without hesitation, that all these addresses have been listened to with unflagging interest. Often when the love of God in the gift of His Son was being illustrated and appeals founded on this fact were being made, the eyes of strong men were filled with tears. Some of the poorest of the poor have heard him gladly. A few strangers to the House of God told me that they had not missed coming one night. We are fully persuaded that



some who were amongst the most careless, have savingly embraced the truth. I do not wonder that William Taylor's services are so eagerly sought for, where Christians desire to reach the toiling masses, for he has a genial manner, perfectly free from ostentation; a frank, manly way of appealing to the conscience; while he makes the way of salvation so attractive in its simplicity, that the most illiterate are able to follow him throughout. I cannot but think that your Society will receive in Scotland, as it most assuredly deserves, the heartiest support when you employ such messengers. As you know, William Taylor has been staying with me at the Manse, and I shall only say now that every member of my household was truly sorry when the time came for him to leave us."

A wandering tramp went to hear William Taylor preach in a large tent in Glasgow, and one night after the meeting, the evangelist was told that a man wanted to see him. Taylor states: "I went to him. He said, 'Taylor, I wish to tell you my story if you will listen. When I have told it, say if you think there is any hope for me. I have had a good education. My father and mother were Christians, and belonged to a Christian church. They have entertained such men as Dr. Punshon many times at their house. I have knelt at the family altar and heard their prayers for

me. My father set me up in a good business, but bad company and drink ruined me. I sold my business, and became a wandering tramp, which broke my mother's heart, and was greatly the cause of bringing my poor old father to the madhouse, where he is to-day. I heard you last night, and saw my danger. I went from here, but not to sleep. I walked this green, and as I looked up and saw the stars, I said, 'My mother is somewhere up there; I wonder if she can see her poor wandering boy; I wonder if she has any influence with Jesus. I dare not pray myself to Him.' So I prayed to my mother, and said, 'Oh, my mother, if you have any influence with Jesus, ask Him if He will have mercy upon me. I waited, but no answer came.' And here the poor fellow broke down, and I could not help crying with him. 'Is there any hope for me?' he asked. 'Yes,' I answered, 'but you've been to the wrong one for help. Jesus' love to you is greater than your mother's. It is to *Him* you must go.' I told him of Christ and of His finished work, and left him apparently without any hope, and saw no more of him for a fortnight. Then one night, just as my services were finishing, a man came to me with a happy face, and shook my hand and smiled, saying, 'Don't you know me? I'm the man that went away that night without hope; but as you told me Jesus was able to-

save, I trusted Him, and he did save even me. I went out penniless the next morning with my new-found joy, when a gentleman gave me some work, and a suit of clothes. I could not come to see you before, as I work till ten at night, but to-day I told my master my story, and asked him to allow me to come and thank you before you left Glasgow. He willingly gave me permission, and here I am to thank you. My only grief is that I cannot undo the past, but now I know that I shall go to meet my once broken-hearted mother in heaven.' "

It was during this tent mission that Taylor's heart was also gladdened by the salvation of a poor wretched woman, who had determined to take her own life by means of poison. She wandered into the tent one evening, and heard from the preacher's lips that there was hope for her in Jesus. She too came to Christ for pardon and peace and went on her way rejoicing.





## CHAPTER XII.

### AS A TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE AMONG THE RABBLE.

**I**N common with other evangelists who have preached at Glasgow, Taylor recognised at once the awful curse of drunkenness which prevails in that city. He accordingly entered the lists against the evil by giving an earnest Temperance address on Saturday, November 8th. At the close many persons came forward and signed the pledge. The evangelist always endeavoured to throw all the influence he could into the Temperance Movement, to help forward the good work wherever he found it being carried on in the course of his numerous journeys.

In February, 1880 it pleased the Lord to grant Taylor a rich blessing in conducting services in St. Mary's Hall, Gloucester. This mission was attended by hundreds of the lowest characters in the place, many of whom were

savingly converted. The best reference is that supplied by *Word and Work* :

### GOSPEL SERVICES IN GLOUCESTER.

Concerning the special work in progress here, a friend writes :—"I am quite at a loss where and how to begin anything like a report of the last three weeks' special services conducted by William Taylor of the Evangelization Society. We quite expected to have large gatherings and great blessing, but our most sanguine expectations have been exceeded. Our congregations have been composed of the poorest of the working-classes, and a great many of those who might have been seen on a Sunday morning rat-hunting, dog-fighting, rabbit-coursing, pigeon-flying, etc., but for the last three weeks have never been absent from the meetings. It has been a sight never to be forgotten to see the eager faces, and each night to notice how the dirty faces had been washed, and the rough hair combed straight down. To have heard those men and women sing those Gospel hymns would have done any one's heart good, and one of our workers called in this afternoon who had been in these people's homes, collecting insurance money. He said : 'Oh ! how my heart has been made glad to-day and how I have rejoiced to hear wife after wife, say, 'Oh sir, what a change there is in my husband ! Our home is not like the same.' William Taylor started a Bible-class on Saturday night, and fifty-five working-men took members' tickets and I think fourteen women gave in their names for a similar class. One poor man said to me to-day that they had been talking together amongst themselves of putting away one penny a week each to keep Mr. Taylor here altogether. Another said to me, 'I feel as if I had buried somebody now that Mr. Taylor has left us.' We can thus easily understand how these people love him. The meetings throughout have been marked for their solemnity and earnestness."

The Editor of the *Western Mail* (Cardiff) wrote about the same mission as follows :

"ST. MARY'S HALL.—Mr. T. Heugh, Honorary Secretary of the St. Mary's Hall Mission, writes us as follows : 'I am sure your numerous readers will be glad to hear of the success that has attended the special services held in St. Mary's Hall. Mr. Taylor from the Evangelization Society, has been nightly addressing hundreds of working-men and women, a great majority of whom have never been accustomed to go to any place of worship. The intense interest manifested by them is astonishing, the meetings being so quiet and orderly that the least noise can be heard. To sit upon the platform, and watch the upturned faces is a sight not soon to be forgotten. The speaker holds his audience spell-bound, and tears roll down strong men's cheeks, and emotion is depicted in every face. They feel that they have one on their own level speaking to them, and it is evident that his appeals reach their hearts. An after-meeting is held at every meeting, and on an average sixty or seventy stay behind to be further spoken to. Mr. Taylor's style is simple and it would be impossible to present the Gospel more plainly than he is doing.'"

At the close of his Mission at Gloucester, the navy was presented with a Bagster's Bible, which was contributed for by seventy persons who had been converted.

In consequence of the great success of this mission, the navy was asked to come again in April. This time the meetings were held in the Pavilion, a large Music Hall in the town. A gentleman present at these gatherings, wrote to the Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society as follows :

Gloucester, 1880.

“I think it due to your excellent Society that I should send a short account of the services of your evangelist, William Taylor, in the Pavilion, Gloucester. The building holds comfortably about one thousand persons. It will give you some idea of the numerical success of the meetings when I assure you that on several occasions those who know best how to estimate numbers, felt certain that there were no fewer than fifteen hundred packed into the building. The gatherings grew in numbers up to the 25th, the last night of William Taylor’s services, when the place was literally besieged, and when the service was over, the people were loth to leave, and before doing so, we asked them to join in singing, ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow, and a glorious sight it was to see so large a number, many of whom had so recently attended to the things which belonged to their peace, unite in singing the grand old Doxology. I have never before seen the masses of working-men so effectually reached as by the addresses of your evangelists, and so far as I can see, there are no agencies in existence so well adapted for evangelizing the masses, as those of your Society. Having attended all the meetings conducted by William Taylor, in the Pavilion, I am able to speak of what I have both seen and heard,

of the blessed effects of the Gospel as proclaimed by him, night after night. To see hundreds of poor, coarse-looking, depraved, and well-known characters of ill-fame, listening eagerly to the 'glorious Gospel of the blessed God.'

Mr. Taylor will never be forgotten by the people of Gloucester, to whom he was made so great a blessing by the grace of our covenant-keeping God."

In March and May of the same year, some very interesting and fruitful missions were held at Bishops Stortford. Mr. E. Roberts speaks thus of Mr. Taylor's work at this place: "I am happy to tell you Taylor's meetings have been a great success. As regards numbers fully six hundred were in the barn, and every foot of room was occupied. Taylor is certainly a wonderful preacher, and I do not think any other man could have been so successful in drawing the people. From what I have heard, I am sure he has made a great and lasting impression. His humility, as well as his earnestness, is greatly to be admired. His memory, common-sense, and tact, are marvellous."

Mr. J. Crisp also wrote: "The services which have just closed, have been the most successful series we have ever held in Bishops' Stortford. There appears to be a general feeling of regret that they have come to an end. Mr.



Taylor has spoken with great power, and has been listened to with increasing delight. He is one of the best working-men preachers I have ever heard. In the whole of his addresses, Christ has been exalted as the Saviour, whilst man's ruin by the Fall has been fully set forth. We have been delighted with the simple way in which God's plan of salvation has been set forth, and with the earnestness with which the message has been proclaimed, and several persons have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

In consequence of the severe hand-shaking ordeal that the navy had to endure at the close of his missions he composed about this time, the following verses as his last "Good-night" to the converts and Christian workers :

Adieu, adieu, dear friends, adieu ;

I wish you all good-night ;

I hope we all may meet above

In the land of pure delight.

Good-night ; may we all happy be,

And in God's love unite ;

And praise the Lord who died for us,

And serve him day and night.

Good-night, good-night, again good-night,

Believe in Jesu's name ;

And then in heaven we'll happy meet,

And never, never part again.

We do not call this poetry, but as sung by Taylor the

effect was most striking. When Taylor had sung these verses, he considered that he had shaken hands with his audience.

In July, 1880, William Taylor was missioning in Bungay, and adjacent villages, where too it pleased God to grant great success to his labours, especially among the rougher element. The late Mr. G. R. Wales, thus testified about the navy's visits to Bungay, and district: "William Taylor has set forth the glorious Gospel of Christ with simplicity, and much power. I fully believe the message has reached many hearts that have hitherto disregarded it. The number of rough men that have persistently attended the meetings has been very large, a decidedly larger attendance of these roughs than ever came to our previous mission services. As to W. Taylor personally, I can speak in the highest terms of confidence and personal regard—his simplicity, frankness, good nature, cheerfulness, and modesty, have won for him golden opinions in Bungay. His manners and conversation bespeak him as one of nature's born gentlemen." The navy often afterwards visited Bungay, and always received a hearty welcome.

At the close of 1880, Taylor held a mission at West Brighton which appears to have moved the whole place.

The lecture-hall was well-filled from the beginning, and after

the first week the small hall adjoining was also filled. At the closing services the place was completely packed, including every available spot where the people could stand. Numbers stayed to the after meetings, and decided for Christ. To quote the words of a resident; "In fact Cliftonville has never experienced such a movement since it has had any existence." Again, in this mission, Taylor was able to gather the very class that could not be reached by any other Christian agency. Some eighty persons testified to blessing received at this mission. But that is only a mere tithe of the good actually accomplished. One man was brought to God who had not opened a Bible for fourteen years, nor attended any religious service whatever. He afterwards joined the Congregational Church, with his wife, who was a backslider.

Mr. Taylor has made frequent visits to Brighton and district. He has preached to large audiences in the Dome, and also at the Connaught Institute, where he was very much liked amongst the soldiers, and Christian workers.

At one of his missions during this year, the navy was informed of a noble example of Christian fortitude. A young girl had met with a terrible accident, being fearfully scalded by boiling water. She was carried to the Hospital

where she suffered greatly but patiently for some days. One night when the nurse had gone out and the ward was quiet, the other patients heard a faint voice singing:—

Jesus ! the name to sinners dear

The name to sinners given,

It scatters all our guilty fears

And turns our hell to heaven.

Then came a pause, when nothing was heard but the ticking of the great clock. Suddenly the silence was broken again by the same faint voice singing :—

Happy if with my latest breath

I may but gasp His name.

Preach Him to all and cry in Death

Behold ! behold ! the Lamb.

The singing ceased, and the nurse having returned, went to the bedside of the sufferer, only to find that the poor girl had gone to heaven.





## CHAPTER XIII.

AN INTERESTING FAMILY EVENT.      WORK AMONGST THE  
SOLDIERS.

**I**N January, 1881, Mr. Taylor's only daughter, Emma, then 19 years of age, was married to Mr. William Dixon at the West Croydon Baptist Tabernacle, where Mr. Dixon was a member. The ceremony was performed by Rev. James A. Spurgeon. For some years Mr. Dixon had been assistant-master at a large public school for boys in Croydon, of which that veteran educationalist Mr. John Drage, was the honoured head. Mr. Dixon was brought to the Lord at Rev. James Spurgeon's Young Men's Bible Class, then conducted by Mr. T. H. Stockwell (now editor of *The Baptist*). Mr. Dixon at once threw himself into all kinds of Christian work, preaching the Gospel in the open-air, mission halls, ragged schools, or wherever opportunity afforded. He received great blessing and help under the navy's preaching, and was a witness of

the glorious missions at Croydon, Thornton Heath, and other places.

In December 1880, Mr. Dixon volunteered, and was accepted by the Baptist Missionary Society, for mission work at Victoria, Cameroons, West Africa. A few days after their marriage, both Mr. and Mrs. Dixon were on their voyage to Africa, but after a short sojourn in that country Mrs. Dixon was, owing to the effect of the deadly climate, invalided home. Mr. Dixon, however, remained there over two years, and did a good work as master of the native Mission School at Victoria. He returned home in 1883, barely escaping with his life, after enduring great hardships and sufferings for the Master. He has told the story of his experience, to audiences in various places in his lecture, "*My life in West Africa.*" He is now Principal of Gordon School, Kingston-on-Thames, one of his fond occupations being preaching to children and young people. In September 1881, Mr. Taylor moved his home from Croydon, where he had for a considerable time resided, to Kingston-on-Thames, and there he held successful tent missions. In May of the next year the navvy evangelist visited Liverpool, and conducted a fortnight's mission in connection with the church of which the Rev.

T. Hobson, was vicar. This clergyman wrote to the Evangelization Society thus: "William Taylor's two weeks' mission came to a close on Sunday evening last. On some occasions our hall, holding 750, was crowded out. We noticed during the last week a large increase in the number of 'smock-frocks,' and Mr. Taylor is a *rara avis* for this class, as an evangelist. I was much struck with his fitness for his work, which he kept closely to all the while. I must say that my heart rejoiced that the Holy Ghost has raised up such a man to do His work under Him as His instrument. The Lord has permitted us to know of 115 persons who have received blessing during the mission. Most of my helpers have been greatly encouraged and cheered, and I felt it good to be present myself. To God be all the praise!"

This is only one of a number of hard-working and devoted clergymen, whose work Mr. Taylor was the means of greatly assisting. Another very encouraging and powerful mission in connection with the Church of England was held at St. Mark's, Wolverhampton. The Rev. George Everard (now of Dover) was then vicar, and Taylor was invited by him to conduct a mission lasting fifteen days. The following letter expresses the vicar's opinion of the navvy's labours. He wrote :

“ St. Mark’s Vicarage,

“ Wolverhampton.

“ *November, 1882.*

“ Mr. William Taylor has just finished his work here, and I am persuaded his fifteen days of earnest talk with our working-people has left a real blessing. I have never before seen such gatherings of working-men, a large number of them of the roughest sort. Yet he thoroughly reached them, arrested their attention, and touched their consciences, and there is real evidence of a desire to lead a new life, in many cases. At our last after-meeting six or seven hundred stayed behind; and another result of Taylor’s visit has been that one of our Bible Classes has risen from about fifty to a hundred, and seems still increasing. Though William Taylor was suffering from a cold part of the time, yet he never failed to interest the people, and I am persuaded that his words will remain on the hearts and memories of many. The chief constable of Wolverhampton was present at many of the meetings and presided on one occasion. On one evening, nearly all the *police* of the borough were present. To my mind, these services give a proof that, without any of those wild and extravagant practices which are often employed, the



great masses of our people may yet be reached with reality and power. I may add that on one of these occasions we could not have had less than two thousand persons present, a very large proportion being working-men."

And concerning another mission held at this place later on Mr. Everard wrote: "I believe the mission was marvellously blessed of God, and that in two ways. It led to a very large amount of actual blessing. Hundreds of working-men gathered day after day in our mission-hall. In my judgment Taylor never spoke more wisely, or more to the point, than he did on this visit. To the women as well as the men his addresses were most useful."

After this Taylor threw himself by anticipation into the work of the Rev. G. H. Thwaites, who was to follow him, and before Mr. Thwaites had given a single address, gained for him a most favourable impression. Consequently Taylor led them on from the Mission-Hall to the Church, and Mr. Thwaites had a most glorious week. The working-men flocked by hundreds, and on one occasion last Sunday, we had about six hundred present. I never knew an evangelist so utterly unselfish. I mean in thinking of the work after he had left, and doing his utmost to make the good effectual and permanent. I am sure hundreds of

our people will say, 'God bless Taylor the navvy.'

In February of this year Taylor had an interesting mission at Alderley Edge, near Manchester. The following is a report of the last meeting, and outline of the navvy's address on that occasion. It is the only press report of his utterances we have been able to obtain, as he would not gather press reports of his meetings.

#### CLOSE OF THE MISSION HALL SERVICES.

"The services conducted for the last fortnight by Mr. William Taylor of London, were brought to a close on Sunday evening, when the ante-rooms as well as the large hall, were crowded. Mr. Taylor delivered a most eloquent and helpful address from the text, Romans v. 21, 'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus-Christ our Lord.' Mr. Taylor said there were two kings reigning in this world of ours at the present moment, and they were at war one with the other. How long the warfare would continue, he knew not, but this he knew, that the congregation before him were subjects of one of the two kings. He would however, leave the subjects and say a few words upon each of the two kings. The name of the one king was 'Sin,' and the name

of the other 'Grace.' The king 'sin,' he said, was a most cruel master, although he always paid his men, for he never kept them waiting for their money. As soon as his subjects have done their work their wages are paid in full. He then described at some length the kind of work which this monster king always demands from his servants. When anyone enlisted in his army he took care to make them in the very worst sense of the term, his slaves. And then look for one moment at the wages this king pays. 'That as sin hath reigned unto death.' Ah! this is it clearly enough, for, 'the wages of sin is death.' This indeed is a dark, ugly picture, but it is nevertheless a good, or rather a true picture of this king's reign. But stop, let us look at the other king. Ah! this is the picture we sinners like to see. The picture, that the more we look at it, the more we want to look upon it, for it grows more beautiful every hour. Yes, 'grace reigns through righteousness!' You see then that this king is just the opposite of his rival. He is a kind and indulgent master, for ever pitying and helping his children. His love knows no bounds, and His subjects are not slaves, but free men, free to inherit eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord and King.'

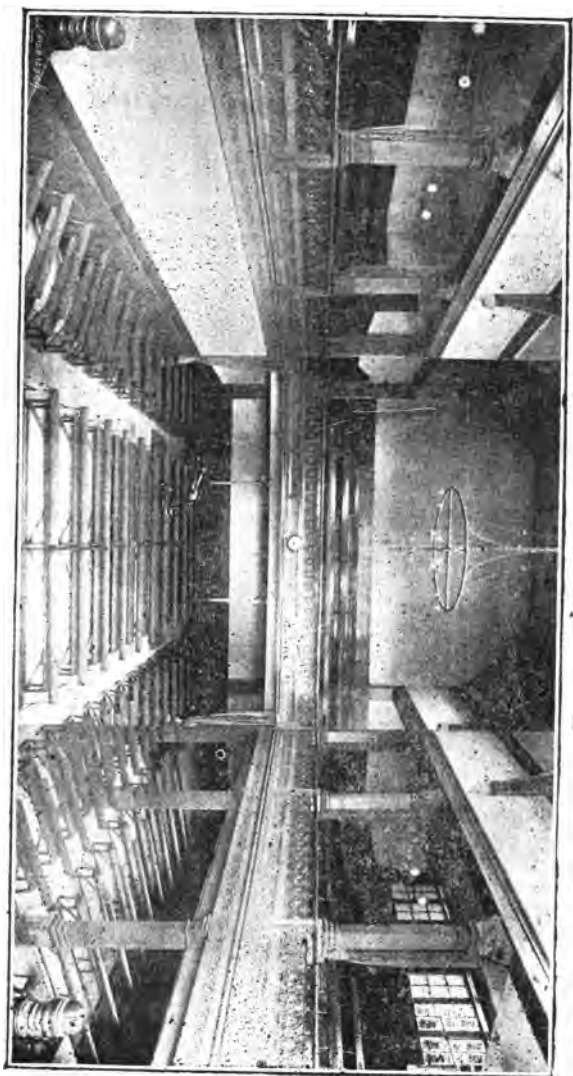
Here Mr. Taylor told a very pointed anecdote on

American slavery, showing how a converted slave had been the means of converting his master, who at once granted him his freedom. 'Freedom from slavery! Ah! yes, it is only a slave can realise what freedom means. Only the sinner who knows what it is to receive a pardon for his sins, knows what liberty means.' Mr. Taylor concluded by telling his audience how easily they could receive a free pardon. If they would only open the door of their hearts, and take Christ for their king, they would ever afterwards be thankful that they had attended these meetings." This mission proved so successful, that it was considered advisable to continue it another week, and Mr. Taylor's son William John took up his father's work for a week and brought the Mission to a successful close.

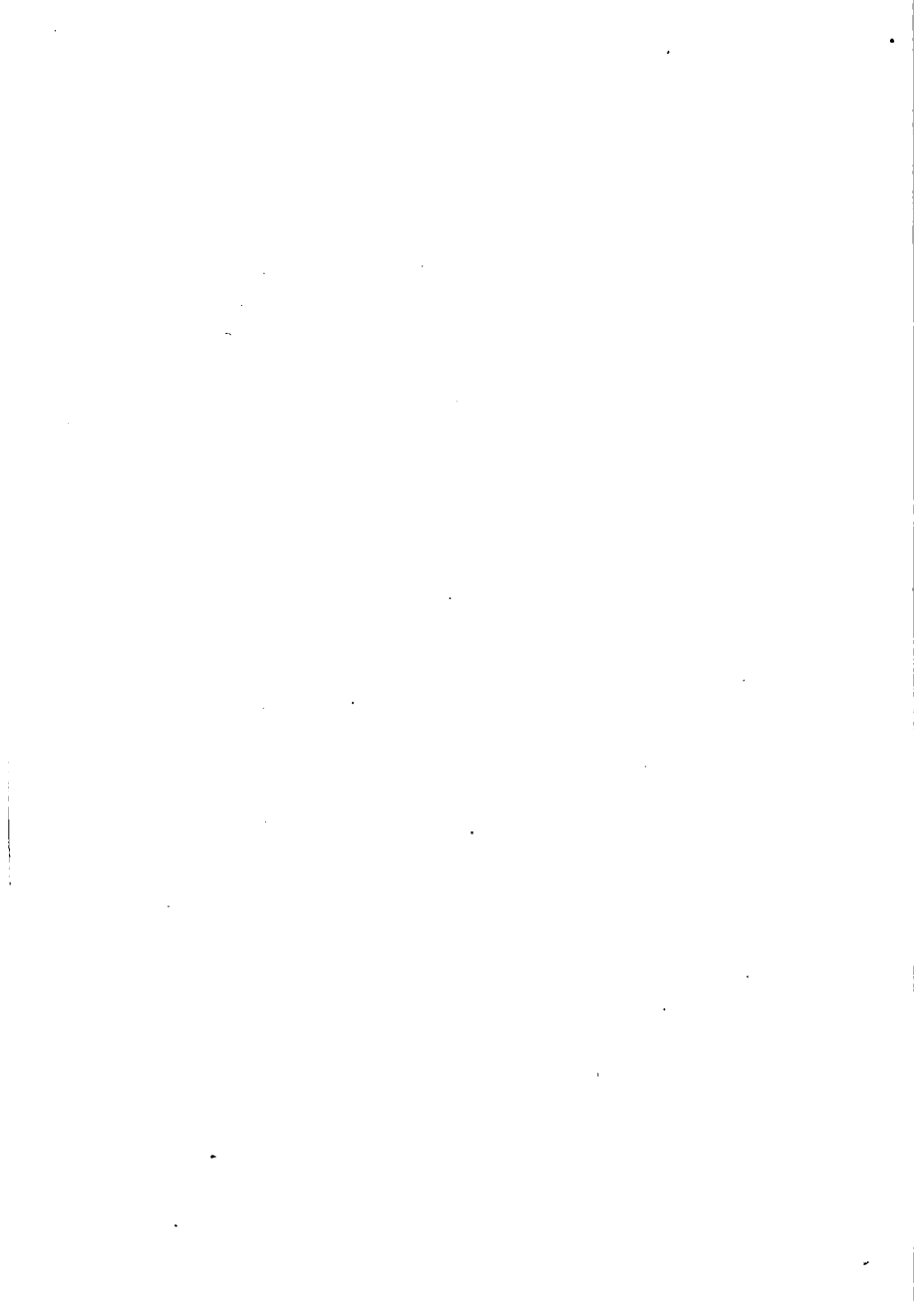
At Easter, Taylor held some large meetings at Dr Barnardo's at the Edinburgh Castle. From April 22nd to 30th he was at the Soldiers' Institute, Portsmouth, where a very encouraging work was accomplished. It goes without saying that at this mission the navy was always a welcome and frequent visitor. Even when stopped from active missions by medical orders, in later years, the Soldiers' Institute was one of the few places visited by the navy for occasional services. In the family circle Mr. Taylor was wont to speak frequently in the highest possible terms of

Miss Robinson and the excellent and Christ-like work with which she is connected at Portsmouth. The blessing which it pleased God to grant on Taylor's preaching in this town, always gained for him a very hearty reception. Some very bad and profligate characters have been led into a better life, through the Gospel he preached at the Soldiers' Institute, Nobb's Lane, and other halls. Taylor first became acquainted with Miss Robinson's work when she was at Guildford.

In June 1882, the evangelist was at Nettlebed, Oxon, and a little later on, conducted a mission in a large Hall, in Reading, the scene of the manifold and greatly honoured work carried on by the Messrs Sutton. Of all places visited by the navvy evangelist, this was the place *par excellence* where he was most thoroughly at home. From his first visit about the year 1871 till the time of his death, the navvy's connection with Reading and the Messrs Sutton, was of the most intimate character. Amongst all the honoured evangelists who occupied the platform at the Abbey Hall, Mr. Taylor was among the most welcome, and as far as can be judged, one whose labours were very largely blessed of God. It was one of the greatest pleasures of his later days to go to Reading for the preaching of the glorious Gospel.



ABBAY HALL, READING.



During his visits to this place, he was often associated with the late Mr. J. H. Redman, whose lamented death at Saadani on the East coast of Africa, was reported in *The Christian* of March 24th. This beloved young missionary was in communication with Mr. Taylor just before he left England. The navy always spoke highly of him, and now they both rest in the Homeland, cheered by the sunshine of the Saviour's presence, whom they mutually loved and served so well on earth.







## CHAPTER XIV.

### TACT REWARDED.—FAILING HEALTH.

TOWARDS the close of 1882, Mr. Taylor had a very successful mission in the St. Andrew's Hall, Plymouth. At this place nothing but failure was prophesied. The weather was bad, and the hall where the meetings were held was large and cold. The people also seemed very loth to come to the services, and ill-at-ease when they did come. The navy at once saw that something must be done to improve the comfort of the place, though some wished to bring the mission to an end. Taylor told them he was determined to win yet, if they would give him permission to follow his own devices. He at once ordered a large stove, and had it fitted up. Also he had several windows and cracks covered up, so as to exclude the cold damp air. He then found, and the people likewise, that the place was much more comfortable. The

navvy preached away right heartily, and the audiences increased till the hall was fairly crowded out, and great blessing was the result.

In 1883, Mr. Taylor again visited Brighton, Portsmouth, Thornton Heath, Pewsey, Wolverhampton, Gloucester, and other places, with much the same results as before, viz., crowded audiences and much blessing. In January, 1884, he was at Barnet holding a Mission for the Rev. H. J. Browne, Vicar of Christ Church. This respected clergyman wrote as follows, to the Honorary Secretary of the Evangelization Society: "We have to thank you very much for sending us so valuable and able an evangelist as William Taylor. His visit was most successful. We were not at all anxious to have the ordinary attendance of church or chapel goers at these meetings, but made a special effort to induce quite a different class of people to be present. It was indeed encouraging to see our large school-room more than crowded with genuine working-men and women, in their working clothes. One had got the idea that the Salvation Army alone had attractions now-a-days for the lower stratum of society, but these meetings were thronged by this class of people. I had not indeed expected that such thoroughly satisfactory results could be arrived at. Your evangelist abounds in, if I may

make use of such an expression, 'the eloquence of the cottage.' The simple and pathetic experiences of humble life, the joys and sorrows of the workman's home, are potent chords, when touched by the hand of one who has himself experienced them, and who has likewise experimental and abiding knowledge of that divine love which can transform the cottage into a palace." This beautiful and touching expression of opinion of one whose experience of the Christian work and life lends authority to his words, sheds a radiant light on some of the secrets of the navvy evangelist's success.

A well-known Christian lady at Nottingham also bears testimony concerning a Mission held in that place in 1864 ; " We have had a series of most encouraging meetings, the Mission-hall well filled on every occasion, and overflowing several nights. Besides plenty of church and chapel-goers, we had numbers of people each night who go nowhere, chiefly working-men, and it was most striking to mark their deep attention, drinking in every word ; tears streaming down many faces. I could tell you of many cases of conversion. Several drunkards have been reclaimed, and one of these said, ' Ah ! I have signed the pledge many times, but always broke it, but now I see the reason—I was

trusting in my own strength. But now I hope to keep it, for I have found Jesus, and He will be my help.' This same man joined the singing band and stood before a public-house, singing, where he had so often gone to drink, in spite of his old comrades who came to the door. I do believe a great amount of good has been done, both to the careless, and to the Lord's people, and I cannot speak too warmly of dear William Taylor. His addresses were the same as ever: beautiful, striking, and wonderfully clear in Gospel truth. He spoke with great power, and indeed there must have been something very unusual to make our hard, Godless, working-men come night after night for sixteen days in succession. Surely the power of the Lord was present to bless."

In February, 1885, Taylor again visited Bungay and conducted a mission for the late Mr. G. R. Wales. As on previous occasions the working-people flocked in crowds to hear the Gospel declared by the humble navvy. A great spirit of unity prevailed amongst the workers. Denominationalism was kept out of sight, and harmony prevailed between church-going people, and nonconformists of the different orders. There is little wonder therefore that the Lord granted His blessing on the mission. Like results also followed a mission held by the navvy in a large barn

at Bishops Stortford in May of the same year. In spite of the weather being very wet, the people came from miles round to hear him. The number kept on increasing until over 400 persons were packed into the barn, listening to the simple Gospel. It was a grand sight to see so many poor hard-working people hearing with rapt attention what the Lord Jesus had done for them. The navvy was always in his element preaching to such a congregation. Who can tell how many thousands of this section of our population have found their way to heaven by means of missions such as this.

Later on, in 1885, Taylor had missions at Birmingham, Reading, and Thornton Heath, with much the same results as had followed his previous visits. Towards the close of that year a series of services had been arranged for him in Scotland, but all had to be cancelled owing to the evangelist having by some means caught a severe cold. This indisposition ushered in 1886, which was destined to be a dark year in the history of William Taylor. On January 3rd he preached with his usual power in the Abbey Hall, Reading. His audience at night numbered about one thousand persons, who listened with delight as the navvy told the story of the Prodigal Son.

On the following Sabbath the navy commenced a mission at the St. Luke's Memorial Buildings, Bunhill Row, London. He got on very well until the Tuesday week (January 19th,) but on that night he had great difficulty in preaching, more indeed than he had ever had before. He felt very ill, and could scarcely get home. Next day he complained of pain, and tightness of the chest, and not feeling any better, but rather worse, he wrote to Captain Smith, who at once ordered him to Dr. Kidd, at Finsbury Circus. This highly-gifted medical man did not at once tell the navy how serious his condition was, but simply ordered him to rest. Another evangelist therefore had to finish his mission at Bunhill Row, which was the last series of services which Mr. Taylor conducted. A few days later, Dr. Kidd very gently revealed to the navy that his heart was in a very serious condition, and indeed so serious that he prohibited him from preaching for some time to come, and told him plainly that *he would never take another mission*. The word "*never*" sounded like a death-knell in Taylor's ears. He often said afterwards that he did not know how he got home that day. How he crossed the London streets, and escaped the carts and omnibuses he could not tell. Like a man in a dream he wandered to

his home somehow, and by the mercy of God arrived there at length.

For some days he scarcely touched his food, or spoke a word to anyone. A dark cloud had gathered over the hitherto cheerful navvy evangelist. The thought that he could *never preach again* continually haunted him, and it was worse to him probably than it would have been to a business man, who was piling together his golden thousands, to be told he could never go to business again. But he submitted to the Divine will, and like Job, said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." His friends and family still had hopes that the case would not prove so bad as represented, but each succeeding examination dashed their hopes to the ground, and matters grew worse. It gradually leaked out that the navvy had severely strained the main artery, and might at any moment (even whilst preaching) be called into his Master's immediate presence. There can be no doubt whatever but that this was brought about by Taylor's exertions on the public platform, especially during the first fifteen years of his career.

Only those who heard him between 1864 and 1884, can have any idea of the manner of man he was. After a long rest, and careful treatment he got a little better, and was able to preach occasionally. His engagements however,

were very uncertain, and many had to be cancelled. He preached at the Soldiers' Institute, Portsmouth ; Reading ; Mildmay Park ; Cambridge ; South Croydon ; and a few other places. During this year he removed his home from Kingston to Fulwell, Upper Teddington, in hopes that the health of himself and his wife would be benefited. During 1887 the navy was able to take single services at intervals, between spells of ill-health, at Down Lodge Hall, Wandsworth ; Burgess Hill ; Thornton Heath ; Croydon Theatre ; Charrington's Assembly Hall ; Portsmouth, etc. It was a great comfort to him that the doctor allowed him to take these meetings, but he was warned to preach quietly, and was very often accompanied by one of his sons, or some member of the family.

This year the navy was greatly cheered by a letter received by Captain Smith, speaking of his work in years-gone by. It was as follows :

AFTER MANY DAYS.

"Pavenham Vicarage, Bedford,

*December 1st, 1887.*

My Dear Sir,

Will you allow me to give you a few of the thoughts that passed through my mind the other day, as I sat and thought of your work ? I was first made aware of the existence of your Society when curate of Christ-



Church, Burton-on-Trent, about eleven or thirteen years ago, 'We are going to have a navy from the Evangelization Society,' said my vicar to me one night. 'And you may go and hear him,' thought I; 'but *your* navy is not going to preach to me.' Much chagrined, however, to find that Taylor's first address had so told on the people as to have gained him favour in the eyes of them *all*, I so far swerved from my purpose that I went the next night and heard him, thinking possibly I should gain a little popularity by extending to him a curate's welcome. But at once I encountered the humbling fact that *the navy was a far better preacher than the curate*, and I could not close my eyes to the truth that the man had brought us a blessing from God. It was a wonderful season of refreshing that we had, and several of my dearest friends were brought to God at that mission. Only last Tuesday evening, being back once more at dear old Burton, I was privileged to meet with those who, converted on the same occasion, had stood the test of years, and were still found among the most consistent of Mr. Guest's church members. I might certainly speak of many more, but two remarkable conversions were brought again to my thoughts, as I sat in your office the other day, and thought of Taylor's first visit to Burton. One was that of my friend, J. B., who, though an ex-reformatory lad, became one of the most thoughtful students of God's Word I remember to have met with. The other was that of my friend, W. H., who has, by God's blessing, become the most successful evangelist I know at the present time.

I must tell you something about H's work. I had been taking a mission at St. Mark's P——; and as I was coming away, I suggested to my friend, the vicar, that he should get him down for some school-room services. He acted on my advice, with the result that nearly two hundred souls were gathered for Christ in the short space of three weeks.

Returning again to the same parish, I had good opportunity for testing the reality of the work, and *real* I found it to be; my young friend was lovingly enshrined

in the hearts of hundreds of people, a very great many of whom were regarding him as their spiritual father in Christ.

Soon after this, I saw a letter in *The Christian*, from the Rev. D. B. Chapman, the rector of Wambrook, who stated that nearly half his parishioners had been brought to the Saviour through the same instrumentality. Here, again, I was permitted to test the genuineness of this reported success in connection with the work of H., and found it had not been over-rated. After several such missions, he was sent by your Society to some of our largest towns, where the power God granted him in preaching the Word, as well as in attracting the people to hear it, was so very extraordinary that a Christian merchant secured his permanent services for the district in which he was preaching, and again such blessing attended his efforts, that numbers of souls were added to the church, and I have heard my old vicar, the Rev. C. Guest, affirm that he never expected to get a sweeter foretaste of heaven than had been given to him when privileged to spend a few nights among the converts of this mission. A letter received this morning from a friend, tells me that he is labouring this week in Glasgow, with the same marked success as has been given to him in other places.

Well, dear sir, as I realized that H——had been but one among many who had been brought to the Saviour by the agency of the Evangelization Society, I said to myself that I ought more earnestly to recommend it to those who are seeking to reach our Christless masses with the soul-saving Gospel of the grace of God.

At one time I suspected it of being an Anti-Church organization, but soon found that I was wrong. Then I supported it as doing a most blessed work with the Gospel among the people the churches failed to reach. I afterwards quarrelled with it, as being too slow and much too quiet for the times. And now, weary of outside demonstrations that so many people deem essential to the success of evangelistic work, I fervently pray God to continue to give it His blessing, as being most calculated in my poor

judgment, among very many kindred societies, to effect the end sought by one and all in the conversion of the very, very many, who are living without God, and without Christ in the world.

Believe me, Dear Sir,

Yours Faithfully,

John E. Linnell, Vicar of Pavenham.

To The Honorary Secretary,

The Evangelization Society,

21 Surrey Street, Strand, London W.C."

About this time, Taylor frequently visited the Mission Hall, South Croydon, for Sunday services. This place was the scene of the devoted labours of the Misses Watney (now of Bournemouth). Taylor was always sure of large audiences and a right loyal welcome at this mission. It was here he made many friends, amongst others being Mr. H. Dabbs, a devoted Christian worker amongst the 'Surrey' villages. In February, 1888, the navy gave a series of Wednesday evening addresses in a new hall at Kingston-on-Thames. The local press thus noticed these meetings :

#### WILLIAM TAYLOR, THE NAVVY EVANGELIST.

" This popular working-man preacher is now delivering a series of Gospel addresses at the Elm Road Mission Hall on each Wednesday evening in February. It is not generally known that this neat and well-fitted mission hall has been erected by our fellow-townsmen, Mr. David Hallett at his own expense with the sole object of attracting and benefiting by the Gospel-teaching, those inhabitants of that

thickly populated district who never darken the doors of any place of worship. Services have been held for some weeks past, but the need of some special effort was manifest. Mr. Taylor's services were secured to give impetus to the work. He is the oldest preacher in the Evangelization Society, and has for over twenty years conducted large missions throughout the United Kingdom, with a great amount of blessing and success at every place he has visited. His style of speaking is perfectly natural and easy. Great fluency, and a large amount of native oratory, are the chief features of his addresses. He has the happy gift of being able always to hit the right nail on the head, and can make his audience weep or laugh at will. His explanation of Gospel-truth is so clear and simple that the most illiterate cannot fail to understand it. He commenced the series on Wednesday evening last, by an address, entitled, 'The sure way to be happy.' The speaker completely captured his hearers' attention, and produced a most favourable impression. Anecdote and exposition were handled in a most masterly fashion, and marked the evangelist as a man of no ordinary ability and experience."





## CHAPTER XV.

### EVENTIDE. HIS SONS AT WORK.

IT was at a Gospel meeting at Chelsea that a certain officious gentleman tried to teach the navy how to do his duty, but was thoroughly disappointed with the result of the trial. It is one of an evangelist's many troubles to have to meet such characters, and some do not dispose of them so easily as did the navy. This gentleman met Taylor as the people were crowding into the hall, and said : "Now, Taylor, I am going to give out the first hymn." "Yes, sir!" replied the navy. "And then I will pray, Taylor." "Yes, sir!" "And then I shall read the Scriptures, and probably speak on them." "Yes, sir!" "And then I will give out another hymn." "Don't you think you had better give the address, and do all yourself?" queried the navy. "Oh, no," replied our friend, "I thought it would be wise to take some part." "Look, here, sir," said Taylor, "When my Society

sends a man to preach, he is expected to take charge of the meeting from beginning to end, and I do not wish you or any one else to take my duty out of my hands. Allow me to do my own work." The friend troubled him no more that night. Taylor was always glad of the help of any Christian workers whether rich or poor. But he resented any attempt to supersede him as leader of any meeting he was sent to take.

In this year (1888) another most encouraging letter, testifying to the abiding results of Taylor's work, reached the Evangelization Society :

*"Sunderland, 22nd November, 1888.*

Dear Sir,

In my pastoral visiting I came across a man and his wife who have been for fourteen years members of the church over which I am pastor, who were brought to Christ over fourteen years ago through the preaching of our beloved brother, William Taylor, in the Victoria Hall. I thought it only right to let you know this, as it is another testimony to the abiding results of the work done by the Evangelization Society.

Yours faithfully,

F. E. MARSH."

This year the navy preached again at Cambridge, Reading, Mildmay Conference Hall, and Wandsworth. He also commenced his occasional visits to Miss Hayes' Mission Room, Fulwell. This good work had been

steadily growing for some years owing to God's blessing upon the faithful and continuous labours of this devoted lady and her band of praying helpers. From a little cottage meeting commenced in humble reliance on the Lord, the little mission grew till it is now a work of considerable importance and is exercising a very large influence for good in the neighbourhood. Best of all, many souls have been saved through the labours of the evangelists and other friends, and still the work proceeds. At this pleasant spot, within a few minutes walk of his own door, the navvy found a congenial place of witness for his Master. And a loving and all-wise Providence had decreed that this should be the mission where his last address would be delivered.

In December of that year, the navvy caught a severe internal cold which had a bad effect upon his failing health. In 1889 he took occasional services at Teddington Mission Hall, where he was assisted by Mr. Greenwood (now also preaching for the Evangelization Society). Also at Stratford, Oxted, Canning Town, South Croydon, Aylesbury, and Portsmouth. At the end of July he journeyed to Clatford, Hants, where his sons, W. J. Taylor, and Noah Taylor, and Mr. William Dixon, had conducted tent

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services the previous summer. At the Workmen's Hall and Schools, Mr. Henry Tasker of the Waterloo Ironworks, has carried on an excellent work for many years. The navy was well-known here, for he had conducted very successful missions at this place some years before. Many of the Christian workers had been brought to the Lord during those missions, and it was not strange that large numbers gathered to hear the navy once again on July 28th, and August 4th, 1889. Monday, August 5th, being Bank Holiday, a large audience assembled in the afternoon. The navy preached on that occasion from Psalm 23rd, in his old style and with his wonted power, though his voice was not what it used to be in his earliest days.

About this time, William Taylor was greatly cheered by the good news he received from time to time concerning the Tent work carried on by his two sons William John and Noah Taylor, in Hampshire. Both these young men were working in connection with the Evangelization Society. The former had passed through Mr. Spurgeon's Pastors' College, and has been a successful evangelist for nearly 15 years. His brother Noah was then under training, and promised to be a most acceptable preacher of the Gospel, and the hopes of his friends have not been disappointed. He has filled his father's place on more than one



occasion at the Fulwell Mission Hall, Abbey Hall, Reading, Croydon, and other places. It was indeed a cause for great joy with the navvy evangelist that in his declining years two of his sons had been thus called by God to follow in their father's footsteps.

William John Taylor the eldest son, has conducted missions in tents and halls in many parts of England and Wales, and is at present attached to the Scottish Branch of the Evangelization Society and is resident in Glasgow. His preaching strongly resembles that of his father's in many points, but he has had good educational advantages which his father never had. Noah Taylor is also engaged in the work in England for the Evangelization Society. In the month of January, 1890, Noah Taylor and Mr. William Dixon conducted an interesting mission at Whitton, near Hounslow, at which it pleased the Lord to save souls. During the same month the navvy evangelist and his wife were both prostrated by the influenza, then raging with such virulence. It was a very severe attack, and caused the navvy's friends no small amount of anxiety, knowing as they did the weak state of his health.

By the sparing mercy of God both slowly recovered

and Taylor was soon afterwards able to preach at Miss Robinson's Institute, Portsmouth; he also visited the Connaught Institute, Brighton; Miss Watney's Hall, Croydon; Romsey Town Hall; Reading; Cambridge Theatre; Fulwell Mission Room; and a few other places. The terrible winter of 1890-91 tried the evangelist exceedingly. Many of his engagements were cancelled, as it was dangerous for him to attempt to travel or preach. In February he was able to take services in Reading and Cambridge. Later on he was once more at Fulwell Mission Room and at the Down Lodge Hall, Wandsworth. In the month of April he was once again laid aside with illness, and had to keep to his room. A severe cough, which nothing seemed to check, shook his frame. Many times indeed his dear ones feared he would break blood vessels with the fearful straining involved for hours together. By careful nursing, however, he was safely brought through the attack. Taylor's first service after this illness was at Miss Hayes' Mission, Fulwell. He also visited Shaftesbury Hall, Cambridge, Goring (Berks), Dr. Barnardo's, St. Giles' Christian Mission, and Brighton.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### HIS DEATH.

**A**T the end of September, 1891, Taylor, accompanied by his wife, visited his son, William John at Glasgow, hoping that the change would greatly benefit their health. In this city, the scene of some of his greatest successes, the navy evangelist preached three times only. On Sunday September 27, in the Grove Street Institute, morning and evening. At the latter service some 700 persons were present. On the following Wednesday he preached again, but had great difficulty in getting through his address, as he was feeling very unwell. It very soon became evident that the change of air did not suit him. Medical advice was called in, but for some time he was confined to his room. The cough already referred to, returned with more vigour than ever. At length, seeing no prospect of improvement, he determined to attempt the

long journey home. Bidding a loving farewell to his Scotch friends who would have liked him to remain longer, William Taylor left for the South, and, after the long journey, arrived at Fulwell, much exhausted. This much grieved his son, also Mr. E. J. Mitchell who invited him down, and was for fifteen years a very intimate friend. Severe and continuous bleeding at the nose followed the cough, and medical aid had to be called, in order to check it. But it was found that the bleeding had relieved the cough, which in fact almost disappeared. These serious symptoms however, caused the navy's friends great alarm, as they fully expected his end was drawing near. But again his life was lengthened.

Our readers must not suppose that all this suffering and trial had damped the navy's cheerful spirits, for though a little quieter than usual, it was always a blessing to be with him in his sick room. On these occasions he would sometimes talk cheerfully about going home. He would say "It won't be long before we are done with this old world and all that belongs to it. We're going home apace." He was utterly unselfish, and always thinking and planning for the welfare of those about him.

On December 18th, he distributed the prizes and

certificates to the boys of the Gordon School by whom he was deeply respected. He afterwards gave a short address taking as his subject "*The race to heaven.*" Little did the boys think that the speaker's race was almost run as they listened to his bright cheery words.

In December 1891, he was much better, and able to attend the annual meeting of evangelists, at Surrey Street, Strand, London. He had always managed to get to this meeting in former years. On this occasion he met with his brother evangelists for the last time on earth. On the Christmas-day the whole family, including W. J. Taylor, gathered at his daughter's home, at Kingston-on-Thames. The navvy seemed quite himself that day—very cheerful and talkative. But at family prayers, in the evening, some of his dear ones noticed a tinge of sadness about the beautiful but simple prayer he offered. One sentence is stamped indelibly on their memories. "Some of us may be in our graves, and the grass growing over us this time next year. Help us, Oh Lord, to work for Thee while it is called to-day." They little thought as they knelt together that joyful Christmas night, that his dear voice would be hushed in death within nineteen short days. Is it not well that Divine Wisdom draws the veil of silence over our future?





On December 30th, his son, William John, left on his return to Scotland, to carry on his mission work in Glasgow, and never saw his father alive again. During the first week of 1892, William Taylor was making preparations to move to Kingston-on-Thames. He had, in fact, taken a house close to Gordon School, in order to be near his daughter, as Fulwell was considered too isolated. He was, about this time, feeling very much better, and his happy presence and cheery words continued to gladden all around him. Even when the shadows of death were gathering over him, his words to various members of his family were words of cheer and words of counsel. Truly death had no terrors for him, but was rather the door into eternal life and glory. It may be truly said of the navvy evangelist that he died in harness ; as he preached at the Mission Room (Fulwell) for the last time on Sunday afternoon, January 10th, from 1 Peter ii. 6th and 7th verses. Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone, and His preciousness to believers was the topic upon which he dwelt with much joy. Those who heard him with such profit on that afternoon never suspected that it was to be his final message for God.

His son Noah, preached in the evening, when his father read and expounded the 91st Psalm, which was *his last public act of service.*



His frequently expressed desire was, that he might preach just before he died, also that he might be at home, and that he might be unconscious of approaching death. All three things were granted him. Monday was spent in helping several destitute people, with money supplied to him, for that purpose.

On the following Tuesday about 12-30, whilst engaged in writing a reply postcard to Captain Smith (a facsimile copy of which we print),

17 Florence Terrace  
 1 Ensign Road  
 Teddington  
 July 12/92  
 Hon Sec  
 Dear Sir  
 I Quite hope to be safe  
 for Fulwell Road Jan 24th  
 and 31 without the help  
 of Noah I am shaking

He was suddenly struck with apoplexy: doubtless connected with his strained heart. The writing of this postcard was

William Taylor's latest act on earth. It is remarkable that the last word he wrote, when struck by death, was "speaking,"—which indicated the work he had been doing for so many years. He died after being unconscious for ten hours, except for two minutes, when he tried to speak, but could not distinctly, and managed to draw his wife's hand into his, and squeeze it. His stricken wife and children listened for a word of farewell, which however, it pleased the Lord to withhold. In response to telegrams his children were speedily gathered together, but William John, who travelled all night from Glasgow, arrived some hours after his father's departure to be for ever with his Lord. The news of the sad event was received with much surprise and grief throughout the district.

The funeral took place at Kingston Cemetery, on January 16th, the service being conducted by Mr. John Wood, of the Evangelization Society, in accordance with a promise he had made to Taylor. Mr. Ernest Matthews, and a few other evangelists, were present to pay their last tribute of respect to the deceased. The day was bright, but bitterly cold, and therefore the service at the grave was brief. The coffin, in which lay all that was mortal of the Navy Evangelist was covered with beautiful wreaths sent by

relatives and friends. It bore the simple inscription—  
“William Taylor—Died January 12th, 1892, age 57.”  
One lovely wreath was sent by his neighbours, and bore  
the verse :

“Home at last, thy labour done,  
Safe and blest ; the victory won ;  
Jordan past, from pain set free,  
Angels now have welcomed thee.”

After the coffin was lowered into its last resting place, Mr. John Wood delivered a short, but most touching, address, in the course of which he said : “We are to-day laying to his rest one of God’s warriors, who has been used by him to the winning of a multitude of souls. He has been a standard-bearer for the Lord, leading on His host to victory. He has fought a good fight, and kept the faith. Now he has entered the rest of the blessed, and his works do follow him. May we who are left to mourn his loss, strive to follow his example as he so faithfully followed his Lord, and work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work.”

Many leading Christians of the neighbourhood were present at the funeral, including Messrs. Austin, Brown, Baker, Blandy, Greig, Smith, and others. The local papers published accounts of his death and of the obsequies, as he

was well-known and highly esteemed in the district. The sorrow-stricken widow received a large number of letters of condolence from sympathetic friends in various parts of the country. Amongst others, letters were received from Captain and Mrs. Smith, Messrs. Sutton of Reading, Mr. Henry Varley, Miss S. Robinson of the Soldiers' Institute, Portsmouth, Miss Hayes, the Misses Watney, Messrs. Hardwicke, Vawser, and Barnes of Cambridge. Mr. John Terry, of High Barnet, Mr. E. J. Mitchell, of Glasgow, Secretary of the Scottish Branch of the Evangelization Society, and many other Christian workers.

A stone has been erected at the head of the grave of which the following is a copy :

In Loving Memory of  
WILLIAM TAYLOR,  
**THE NAVVY.**

Evangelist for 25 years with the Evangelization Society.

*DIED 12th JANUARY, 1892,*

AGED 57 YEARS.

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A devoted husband, kind father, wise counsellor, true friend, and successful preacher of the Gospel.

"Well done, good and faithful servant."



## CHAPTER XVII.

### CONCLUSION.

**M**R. JOHN WOOD made a personal visit of condolence to Fulwell, on behalf of the Evangelization Society, and its company of preachers, who deeply felt the loss of Mr. Taylor. It appears that the Committee happened to be assembled when the telegram arrived announcing that Taylor was dying. The business in hand was promptly suspended and all the members at once united in prayer that the Lord would be with His servant in the river of death, and give him an abundant entrance into heaven.

In a subsequent letter to Mr. Dixon, Captain Smith, the Honorary Secretary wrote: "By the death of William Taylor I have lost a respected personal friend, and the Society a much-valued servant." To this gentleman William Taylor was deeply attached. He made no secret of the fact that he owed him a deep debt of gratitude for

acts of kindness extending over so many years. The name of Captain Smith was a household word in the navy's family. No one knew better than Taylor, how much of the success of the Society was due to its wise and skilful Honorary Secretary who for nearly twenty-five years has been thus engaged in the work.

On March 17th, 1892, *The Christian* published an excellent sketch and portrait of the navy evangelist. It paid a warm tribute to the successful evangelistic career of Mr. Taylor. This notice was followed on April 7th, by another interesting account in the *Christian Herald* accompanied by a portrait and six scenes in the navy's life. *The Baptist* also published a character sketch of the evangelist's powers as a platform orator. In September 1892, Mrs. Garnett of Ripon, in her quarterly letter to *Navyies* told in tender terms the story of William Taylor.

What Taylor's loss meant to the Evangelization Society may be well estimated by what has already been said of his labours. But oh, how he will also be missed at home, where as a husband and father he so long and so nobly testified for his Lord. He has left a widow who played no inconsiderable part in his successful career. While he was away on his missions, she was caring for his

comfort at home, and bringing up the children respectably and in the fear of God. During nearly forty years of wedded life she has been the object of ever-widening regard. She feels her bereavement keenly but bows to the will of Him who doeth all things well, and looks forward with joy to the time when she will join her husband in glory. To her memory we owe some of the most interesting reminiscences recorded in these pages.— Mrs. Taylor is now living in her little cottage at Kingston, where her remaining days will doubtless be spent, surrounded by such comforts as can be provided for her. May He, who is the husband of the widow, remain her one source of abiding comfort ! There are five surviving children ; one daughter, (Mrs. W. Dixon,) and four sons viz., William John (evangelist labouring in Scotland,) George, Noah (evangelist in England,) and Arthur.

On William Taylor's memorial card, we find the following verse of which the navvy was very fond. His cheery voice was often heard singing it at home, and in his earlier days he used to delight in it upon the platform, when he told the story of his friend, old Harper :—

Hark, hark, my Lord and Master calls me,  
All is well !

W soon shall see His face in glory,

All is well !

Farewell dear friends, adieu, adieu,

I can no longer stay with you,

My glittering crown appears in view,

All is well ! All is well !

On his visit to Gordon School, Kingston, only a few days before he died, he was singing this verse as a young lady entered the room, and when he had finished he said to her, "That's true, isn't it, Katie ?"

Another simple hymn of which he was very fond, we copy from his Bible ; it has an enhanced interest owing to the exactness with which it describes his own last moments :

One night as I lay sleeping

Upon my humble bed ;

A dream, or holy vision

Disturbed my thoughtful head.

Me-thought my days were ended,

My mortal struggles o'er,

And that I had ascended

To Canaan's peaceful shore !

Hosannah !

Just as my house was rending,

My mortal home of clay,



Bright angles were attending

To hear me and reply.

Then came "And you are?"

I answered, "I am I am."

And then the next best to me,

I found myself in time.

I heard her thousand saying

"There was one in this place,

Behind an hour of grace.

A summer saved by grace!

Come, make thy name no more as

In our immortal time.

Sing long, and thou art passing

Jehovah's hourless praise."

I saw my great Redeemer.

Who suffered for the tree.

"Come in," he said, "thou sinner!"

Inherit life through me.

Thy warfare is over, O hero,

Thy work is done and done.

Be seated now, be seated.

On my eternal throne!"

The streets of Zion's city

Are paved with purest gold,

Its beauty and its grandeur

By man was never told.  
There flows the crystal river ;  
There comes no sin nor strife ;  
The people feast for ever  
Upon the tree of Life !

Dear reader ! Can you adopt this language as your own ? If in that same atoning work of Calvary in which the converted navvy rejoiced as all-sufficient, your hope is also immovably fixed, then through the abounding grace of a crucified and ascended Saviour you may of a surety anticipate a blissful meeting with Taylor and a host of other toil-worn soldiers of Christ, who now cast their crowns at the King's feet in the land where the redeemed "hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." By Grace are ye saved, and that through faith ! The memory of the just is blessed !



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE SECRET OF WILLIAM TAYLOR'S SUCCESS.

**N**OT unnaturally, the question arises from a perusal of the foregoing pages, "How is it to be accounted for that William Taylor, born in such lowly circumstances and without any of the advantages of education and culture succeeded in influencing so many of his fellow-creatures to so remarkable a degree, in the interests of the Gospel of Christ?"

The simple story of his career is its own witness. It cannot fail to create an impression on any thoughtful mind. Beyond dispute the fact stands that *a power outside himself* was working through him. Hence his testimony issued in revolutionizing human characters previously out of touch

with their Maker, and having neither sympathy with, nor thought of, Him whose resplendent life, tragic death, and glorious resurrection became a seed-corn presaging the harvest of a redeemed world.

God chooses His own human instruments, and they are significantly often picked out of earth's roughest quarries. William Taylor as a navvy could bear the message to, and secure a hearing from, a section of the community altogether beyond the range of bishops, clergy, and ministers. Addressing sons of toil he could speak as man to man, and there was always a *grip* about his word which belongs only to one who, in the experience of life's battle, is at once on a level with those whom he would influence. Taylor had not only worked with pick and spade for his daily bread, but he had actually, alas! suffered collapse under the main temptations which beset our artizan toilers. He was called out by Divine grace and fitted to be a standard-bearer in the battle for the Lord, to win trophies which should shine the more brilliantly in the Saviour's crown because they had been secured from the dark places of the earth.

It goes without saying, though it ought to be said, that Taylor believed in conversion because he had *himself* been converted. The change, which made him a successful

evangelist to his fellows, was like unto that effected in the countryman's gun, which was good for nothing until furnished with a new lock, stock, and barrel. Like Saul of Tarsus, when he heard the voice from heaven, he was literally turned round in his aims and sympathies. He had been a terrible servant of Satan, and grace at once made him an illustrious ambassador for Christ. His doctrinal creed was not thereafter of the "anything-arian" type. He did not belong to the "broad" school, but set his belief down upon the two primary facts affecting the salvation of the race, namely, the universality of ruin wrought by sin, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's redemption.

William Taylor's knowledge of, and dependence upon his Bible, was a conspicuous feature of his ministry. The Word of God was his strong-tower in the conflict against evil. It was his sword, shield, and buckler. As Sampson's strength lay in his hair, so William Taylor was an invincible influence because of his clear knowledge of the inspired Word. The favoured Bible and Testament he habitually used are now treasure-troves in the family. They are well-thumbed, and are copiously marked with index references throughout, while many pages contain full outlines of addresses, the notes being written between the

spacings and on the margins. He was a continual and close student of the "old book."

His faith was child-like in its simplicity, and had its basis in the substitutionary and propitiatory work of the Saviour. This was the very pivot of every discourse. Just as it is said that every road leads to London, so he found or promptly made in all the subjects he touched, some easy path leading to Calvary. He incessantly preached the Cross of Christ. Upon the standard uplifted by the successful navy evangelist, was emblazoned the central text, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Herein doubtless lay the explanation of the Holy Spirit's blessing upon his witness.

Nothing would be gained when considering the reasons of his success, by overlooking *his natural abilities*. There is no denying that had he been thoroughly trained and educated, he might have developed into a far-reaching power over all classes of men. He was, for instance, a born orator, and had the gift of speech—the talent for speaking simple Saxon, in a striking degree. He was exceedingly natural, and, with the aid of a strong voice combined with a vigorous manner, he was able to arrest and interest any audience to which he spoke. His

earnestness was patent—the lost condition of sinful man lay as a burden upon his soul, and he stood, irresistibly impelled by the thought of the tremendous issues at stake, to beseech men to be reconciled to God. His imagination was vivid and his powers of description exceptional. He drew Bible-pictures with the skill of an artist, and touched by native eloquence the silent chords of human hearts as one who had both felt and studied the secret forces of character. General Graydon who knew him well said this of him: “William Taylor’s power of attracting the lowest orders of the people is very remarkable, and is, I think, due to his marvellous way of describing Bible and other scenes. Hearts become softened by these descriptions and he then applies them to illustrate God’s love in Christ’s sufferings and death, and then the sinner’s state in the sight of God. He has also such a simple and yet powerful way of putting the Gospel that the most ignorant of the people are able to understand it and to grasp it, so that I have heard of more conversions taking place during his preaching than during that of any other of your evangelists. Another important feature in his preaching is that he uses language which is homely enough for the people to understand. Preachers, as a rule, are too *gentlemanly* for rough characters.”

Another point, which may be usefully named as indicating Taylor's power, was his persevering endeavour to reach the poorest and most ignorant among his hearers. It was an axiom with him that if he succeeded in this, he succeeded altogether. The most illiterate could certainly always comprehend his preaching, while many well-educated people found pleasure in listening to him and were even brought to Christ by his message. Said one newspaper writer, who had casually listened to him, "Does any one wish a choice of religions? If so, he should go to S——. I spent a day there yesterday, and vow that I was never in so eccentrically pious a place before. It is a very small place, kept alive by excursionists who want a little sea-air as near town as possible. It has churches (High and Low) and chapels in abundance, but these do not exhaust the attractions of the place, for when the other churches were empty, I found William Taylor, a converted navy, at the British School, with an audience in tears, preaching the Gospel from his point of view. Though his grammar was shaky and his pronunciation different from that of Oxford or Cambridge, he went straighter to the mark and was more truly eloquent than any preacher I heard that day."



The navy had a *cheerful disposition*. He quite believed the hymn which says :

“ ’Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live.”

His Gospel taught men how to live, and thus of course, prepared them to die. And his religion was the atmosphere he breathed. He was never alternately pious and frivolous, nor did he ever need to assume any strained manner in order to tell “The Old, Old Story.” Taylor was a man of strong will, restrained and brought under the subjective power of the Cross. He was at no man’s bidding, for “One was His Master, even Christ,” and he always seemed to have an unshaken belief that as a preacher he was bound to succeed, as succeed he did. His talent for setting others to Christian work was as evident as his inclination and power to lead the way, whilst combined with the faculty named, was a quick perception which enabled him to adapt men to their right position and best form of service. He was a firm believer in sanctified common-sense and in its exercise never subordinated the work of God to the mere whims of workers.

Concerning his message, it may be interesting to note just one or two features. He always exercised great care in announcing his meetings clearly, and in such a form that

all could understand. His themes or titles and styles of expressing his thoughts, were precisely fitted to those whom he sought to gather in. Here are a few of his favourite subjects, as he treated them: "Noah's Ark and what became of the carpenters"; "The Water of Life"; "The sure way to be happy"; "The World's great sight"—(the place called Calvary; ) "The wanderer welcomed home"—(the prodigal son); "A desperate man converted"—(the demoniac); "The worst bargain man ever made"; (Ye have sold yourselves for nought; ) "The way to Heaven"; "The Two Kings"—(Sin and Grace); "The Master has come and calleth for thee"; "The joyous return"—(Isaiah xxxv. 10); "The Two Rewards"; "The Good Foundation."

Finally, a word should be added about *his home-life*. If it be true that you only know a man as you live with him, then it is an eloquent fact that Taylor's wife and children and most intimate friends, were never outdone in point of love and admiration for the man. When at home the navy was a genuine specimen of a bluff, good-natured, converted Englishman. He thoroughly enjoyed life, and his fireside was to him the cheeriest place this side of Heaven. It is now and then remarked in grim humour that certain children are glad their father is a preacher,

